

health on 27 occasions. His actions were challenged in court for not fulfilling the requirements of the Clean Air Act, and 27 times the court ruled against Mr. Wehrum.

One particular issue that he was involved in was mercury pollution. Under the Clean Air Act, the EPA has to reduce hazardous air pollutants like mercury, which is particularly harmful to children. Instead of protecting this population from mercury pollution, a neurotoxin, Mr. Wehrum decided to advance the interests of polluters.

During his tenure, Mr. Wehrum also led efforts to prevent EPA from addressing climate pollution. Fortunately, the Supreme Court eventually ruled in favor of regulating greenhouse gases, forcing the Agency to take action.

After the Senate blocked his nomination in 2006, Mr. Wehrum decided he would undermine the mission of the Agency on behalf of polluters. In his current role as a corporate attorney, he has sued the EPA multiple times on behalf of clients in the oil, gas, coal, and chemical industries to undermine protections that safeguard public health and the environment. He has used his current position to attack the renewable fuel standard, which requires biofuels to be blended with gasoline—something the big oil companies hate because it means serious competition for dirty oil. So as an attorney for the American Petroleum Institute—the trade association that represents ExxonMobil, BP, and a number of other oil and gas giants—Mr. Wehrum sued the EPA at least four times in an effort to weaken the RFS, the renewable fuel standard. This is deeply troubling, considering that if he gets this job, he will be in charge of administering the RFS, which will allow him to implement his clear agenda. He has done nothing to lead us to believe he would do anything but side with the giant oil companies.

The facts are clear. The RFS boosts energy security, it creates rural jobs, and it is better for the environment than oil. You are never going to see an ethanol spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

Colleagues on both sides of the aisle agree that despite this bipartisan support, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has reduced advanced biofuel blending targets for 2018. Now, with Mr. Wehrum's nomination, I have even less confidence in this administration upholding Congress's intent on the RFS.

He also has a history of willful ignorance of science. When asked whether he believes that greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are the main drivers of climate change, Mr. Wehrum stated that he believes it is an open question—an answer that runs contrary to the conclusion of 97 percent of climate scientists and runs counter to the “National Climate Assessment” that was released by this administration just last week.

Emissions from fossil fuel-fired powerplants are some of the main contributors to climate change. We know this.

At the Office of Air and Radiation, Mr. Wehrum would oversee the repeal of standards that reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the power sector, the Clean Power Plan. He would also be in charge of crafting a weaker replacement, if any.

Let me be clear. A weak standard is an affront to the public health and safety of future generations.

To overcome the challenge of climate change, we must transform our economy to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. If we don't, Americans and future generations will pay an unacceptable price. But rather than driving innovation and pushing us to overcome this challenge, the administration has ordered a retreat. You can see that retreat everywhere, in a budget that would gut funding for science and innovation, in an EPA that values industry profits over the welfare of the public.

The 23rd annual United Nations climate change conference is taking place right now in Bonn, Germany. Two years ago, 195 nations came together to sign the Paris climate agreement in a historic display of the power of collective human will, and they did it because of U.S. leadership.

Now contrast that to earlier this year, when President Trump ordered the United States to retreat. He announced that he was pulling us out of the Paris climate agreement.

Yesterday, Syria announced that it would ratify the agreement. They were the last remaining nation to not be a part of this agreement. We now stand alone as the only country in the world choosing not to be part of the global effort to combat climate change.

Let's be clear. The President has not only ceded leadership, but he has isolated the United States from the global community. He has put us in this dangerous situation simply to protect short-term profits of the fossil fuel industry.

Mr. Wehrum would exacerbate this administration's wrong-headed approach. He is anti-science, anti-public health, anti-environment. That is why the Senate blocked his nomination in 2006. The Senate recognized then that he wasn't fit for the job. He is even less fit today.

I oppose his nomination, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 400, 401, and 402.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Melissa Sue Glynn, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Enterprise Integration); Cheryl L. Mason, of Virginia, to be Chairman of the Board of Veterans' Appeals for a term of six years; and Randy Reeves, of Mississippi, to be Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Memorial Affairs.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Glynn, Mason, and Reeves nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

VETERANS DAY

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, as we prepare to commemorate Veterans Day this weekend, I would like to offer my sincere appreciation to the dedicated veterans who have served our country so bravely over the years. Only in a great country such as ours do we have so many willing and able citizens who volunteer for duty. These selfless individuals understand the importance of protecting our country and are willing to give their lives to do it.

Many of these brave men and women make the ultimate sacrifice, such as my own brother, Jesse Morlan Hatch who was killed in World War II. SSG Aaron Butler of Utah also comes to mind. Staff Sergeant Butler was tragically killed in the line of duty last summer while serving in Afghanistan. The valor of patriots like Jesse and Aaron is indicative of all men and women who volunteer to serve in our Armed Forces. I have always had a deep-rooted respect for America's servicemembers and her veterans.

On behalf of the State of Utah, I would also like to express our humble gratitude for our Nation's veterans and active servicemembers. Throughout

this weekend, Utah will host a variety of ceremonies, all dedicated to celebrating our veterans. The town of Magna will be hosting its annual Veterans Day parade; the town of Howell will be naming its community center after SGT Rocky D. Payne, who was killed in Iraq in 2005; and the students of Granite Park Junior High School will be hosting a special Veterans Day assembly. With events being held all across our State, it is clear to see that Utahns hold our Nation's veterans in the highest esteem. I am honored to represent a State that honors our veterans.

I would also like to personally acknowledge the city of Layton, which will be hosting a grand Veterans Day parade to be followed by the groundbreaking ceremony of a new Vietnam War memorial wall. I could not even begin to describe the endeavor that Mayor Bob Stevenson, the city of Layton, the Utah State Legislature, and so many others have undertaken to bring this wonderful memorial to Utah. I am grateful for their leadership, and I am delighted to see this memorial become a reality.

I will close today by saying this: To all veterans and your families, thank you. Thank you for your sacrifice, for your commitment, and for your dedication to this Nation and its citizens. Most of all, thank you for your patriotism and faith in America. To our Nation's veterans we owe a debt of gratitude that can never be fully repaid.

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I was unavailable for rollcall vote No. 266, on the nomination of Peter B. Robb, of Vermont, to be general counsel of the National Labor Relations Board. Had I been present, I would have voted nay.

Mr. President, I was unavailable for rollcall vote No. 267, on the motion to invoke cloture on William L. Wehrum, of Delaware, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. Had I been present, I would have voted nay.●

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent due to a family funeral for the votes on confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 384 and the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 407.

On vote No. 266, had I been present, I would have voted nay on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 384.

On vote No. 267, had I been present, I would have voted nay on the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 407.●

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING THE UNION LEAGUE CLUB OF CHICAGO

• Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, today I wish to celebrate the Union League Club of Chicago ULCC, and their Salute to Vietnam Veterans event.

As a Nation, we must do everything we can to uphold our commitment to those who have worn the uniform of this great Nation and to their families who have made significant sacrifices on our behalf. On Veterans Day we honor the service of our Nation's heroes and reflect on the debt that we each owe to those who have served this great Nation.

Founded during the Civil War, ULCC has been a leader in providing support for servicemembers and veterans for over 138 years. ULCC, an official DoD Commemorative Partner, operates its own American Legion Posts and collaborates with partner groups that provide support to Active-Duty military personnel. ULCC recognizes that, while servicemembers may come from different backgrounds and different branches, they all hold the same sense of duty and commitment and deserve our full support.

As the daughter of a U.S. marine who fought in Vietnam, our Vietnam veterans hold a special place in my heart. I often say that we must always love the warrior regardless of our feelings about the war. Let us recommit our obligation to Vietnam veterans by ensuring that they have the healthcare, disability support, retirement benefits, and any other resources they have earned.

To all of my fellow veterans, to those still serving, and to all the families that have sacrificed, thank you from the bottom of my heart for your honorable service.

Thank you.●

REMEMBERING GARY SMILEDGE

• Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, it is with great sadness today that I recognize the life and passing of Gary Wayne Smiledge, 72, of Gonic, NH.

Mr. Smiledge served bravely in the U.S. Army during the Korean war. As a member of the 2nd Infantry Division, stationed at Camp Casey south of the DMZ, Mr. Smiledge protected orphanages after serving on the frontlines.

When Mr. Smiledge returned to New Hampshire, his service to his fellow veterans continued. In addition to being a member of the American Legion Post No. 7 of Rochester, he was also heavily involved with the New Hampshire Amputee Group, where he worked with other veterans who lost limbs during the course of their service.

Mr. Smiledge was a beloved member of his community, and he will be missed dearly. I join all Granite Staters in expressing our profound

gratitude to veterans like Gary who have fought for the cause of freedom, putting their country and devotion to duty first.●

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:15 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 918. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish mental health care to certain former members of the Armed Forces who are not otherwise eligible to receive such care, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1133. An act to amend the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide for an operation on a live donor for purposes of conducting a transplant procedure for a veteran, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1900. An act to designate the Veterans Memorial and Museum in Columbus, Ohio, as the National Veterans Memorial and Museum, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2123. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the ability of health care professionals to treat veterans through the use of telemedicine, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2148. An act to amend the Federal Deposit Insurance Act to clarify capital requirements for certain acquisition, development, or construction loans.

H.R. 2601. An act to amend the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to improve the access of veterans to organ transplants, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3441. An act to clarify the treatment of two or more employers as joint employers under the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.

H.R. 3634. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that individuals may access documentation verifying the monthly housing stipend paid to the individual under the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

H.R. 3897. An act to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for the issuance of the Gold Star Installation Access Card to the surviving spouse, dependent children, and other next of kin of a member of the Armed Forces who dies while serving on certain active or reserve duty, to ensure that a remarried surviving spouse with dependent children of the deceased member remains eligible for installation benefits to which the surviving spouse was previously eligible, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3911. An act to amend the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 with respect to risk-based examinations of Nationally Recognized Statistical Rating Organizations.

H.R. 3949. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the designation of State approving agencies for multi-State apprenticeship programs for purposes of the educational assistance programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 12:43 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

H.R. 3031. An act to amend title 5, United States Code, to provide for flexibility in making withdrawals from a Thrift Savings Plan account, and for other purposes.