

and, therefore, gets all the more fuel for the counterclockwise rotation of the winds from the warm water?

I want the National Transportation Safety Board, over which the Senate Commerce Committee has some jurisdiction—of which I have the privilege of being the ranking member—to come up with a quick report.

Now, thank goodness, that so far only four passengers were reported injured and no one was killed. That ship is now returning to port back in the New York area. Thank goodness there was not much damage, and that it is seaworthy. But the question is, When there is a storm brewing, why are mistakes made just like what happened to the El Faro? Before it left the Port of Jacksonville, they knew that a hurricane was coming.

We need to know what happened in this case as well so we can prevent these kinds of accidents that could be so tragic in the future.

The Senate Commerce Committee has oversight of the National Transportation Safety Board, and I want them to come up with answers very quickly and make an admonition to Americans that when a storm is brewing, you don't go out of port.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COATS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Rebecca Goodgame Ebinger, of Iowa, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Iowa.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 30 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

#### TRIBUTE TO RICHARD ANDERSON

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, on Friday of last week as I was getting ready

to leave to go home to the State of Georgia, the United States of America, and the aviation industry received notice that Richard Anderson, CEO of Delta Airlines, will retire after a career of over 25 years in the aviation industry, but in particular a great career at Delta Airlines over the last decade. I rise to memorialize on the floor of the Senate how much my State and the aviation industry owes to Richard Anderson.

Richard took over Delta at a very critical time. In fact, Delta was in desperate straits. Because of his work at Delta, he revitalized the culture of the company, he revitalized the aviation industry in Georgia, and he made it a market for all of us to be proud of. In fact, in 1 year, 2 years ago, Delta was one of the 50 most admired companies in the United States of America and led the world in terms of aviation as stated by Aviation Magazine, but most importantly Richard Anderson came to Washington, DC, when all the aviation industry was in trouble. He was then with Northwest. Delta was having difficulties. He worked with the U.S. Senate, worked with the Finance Committee, worked with me, MIKE ENZI, and others to reform the pension performance act of 2005, and change the way pensions were calculated in order to save the pensions of Delta Airlines and many other airlines in the United States of America. His hands-on effort to revitalize that company led to the most prosperous year in its history in 2016, and the most prosperous decade it had in the last 10 years.

So as he announces he is leaving Delta Airlines and the aviation industry for other things to do, I want to, on the floor of the Senate, commend him for all he has done to make Delta Airlines in the State of Georgia great, all he has done for the aviation industry, and all he has done for the economy of the greatest country on the face of this Earth—the United States of America.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today the Senate will vote on the nomination of Judge Ebinger from Iowa. I am very pleased to be here to support her and to urge all my colleagues to also support her nomination.

I am very proud of the work my colleague Senator ERNST and I have done to fill the vacancies in Iowa's district courts by putting forward two exceptionally talented and qualified nominees, Judges Ebinger and Strand. I said this in committee but, for the benefit of all Members of the Senate, the Iowa nominees are two of the best judicial candidates the President has nominated during his Presidency.

To fill the vacancies in Iowa, I set up a Judicial Selection Commission and invited all interested Iowa lawyers to apply. The applicants were vetted by highly qualified members of the Iowa legal community. After spending hun-

dreds of hours reviewing the applications, the Commission interviewed all 39 applicants. Eleven candidates of the thirty-nine were then selected for a lengthy second round of interviews. At the end of the process, the Commission sent their recommendations to me. In consultation with my fellow Iowa Senator, I was proud to recommend Judges Strand and Ebinger to the White House. Judges Strand and Ebinger have the highest credentials and character and will serve the State of Iowa with honor and with distinction.

I would like to say a little bit more about Judge Ebinger because she is the one of the two we are voting on today. Judge Ebinger received her undergraduate degree in 1997 from Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and her law degree from Yale Law School in 2004. She then served as a special assistant U.S. attorney in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Iowa in Cedar Rapids. There, she prosecuted criminal cases involving narcotics, immigration, firearms offenses, and violent crimes. She then clerked for Judge Michael Melloy on the Eighth Circuit for 2 years, also in Cedar Rapids, IA.

Following her clerkship, she moved to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Iowa as an assistant U.S. attorney. During this time, her practice shifted primarily to white-collar crime. She also handled intake for all child support enforcement cases and sex offender registry violations.

Judge Ebinger received a number of awards for her work with the U.S. Attorney's Office. In 2012, she was appointed to serve as a district judge in Iowa State court and was retained as a district judge in the 2014 election. As a State court judge, she presided over a court of general jurisdiction, handling civil law and equity, criminal, and family court proceedings. She has presided over 40 cases that have gone to verdict or trial.

Judge Ebinger is a highly qualified, well-respected judge already, and I urge my colleagues to support her nomination today.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today we will vote on the nomination of Rebecca Ebinger to fill a judicial vacancy in the Federal district court in the southern district of Iowa.

Ms. Ebinger is a highly qualified nominee who has devoted her legal career to public service. Since 2012, she has served as a district judge in Iowa State court. Prior to joining the bench, Judge Ebinger served as a prosecutor at the Federal and State levels in Iowa, including in the U.S. attorney's offices for the southern and northern districts of Iowa. During her tenure as a Federal prosecutor, she was the lead attorney on cases involving violence against women. Judge Ebinger has the strong support of her home State Senators, Chairman GRASSLEY of the Judiciary Committee and Senator ERNST.

With her qualifications, I can understand why Chairman GRASSLEY recommended her to the President for this nomination. What I cannot understand is why moneyed Washington interest groups are calling on Republican Senators to oppose the confirmation of any judicial nominee, regardless of a nominee's merit or qualifications. Judicial nominees like Judge Ebinger have worked hard to build admirable legal careers that have put them at the top of their profession. When judicial nominees submit themselves to the nominations process, they do so expecting and deserving to be considered by Senators exercising their own independent judgement.

Judicial nominees not only deserve our independent and considered judgement, it is our constitutional obligation as Senators to provide it. The duty to provide advice and consent on the President's nominees is our own and cannot be abdicated to Washington political action committees. This is especially true when such political action committees are advocating that we turn our backs on the American people by completely shutting down the judicial confirmation process.

Too many Americans who have sought justice in our Federal courts since last year have instead found delays and empty courtrooms because of Senate Republicans' obstruction on judicial nominees. Over the course of last year, Senate Republicans allowed confirmation votes on just 11 judicial nominees—and judicial vacancies soared across the country. When Senate Republicans took over the majority in January of last year, there were 43 judicial vacancies. Since then, vacancies have dramatically increased to 77—an increase of more than 75 percent. Furthermore, the number of judicial vacancies deemed to be "emergencies" by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts because caseloads in those courts are unmanageably high has nearly tripled under Republican Senate leadership—from 12 when Republicans took over last year to 32 today. Refusing to confirm any judicial nominees for the rest of this year would make the high number of vacancies in our Federal judiciary even worse.

In addition to the vote on Judge Ebinger's confirmation today, we have agreed to vote this week on another Iowa district court judge. When we return from the Presidents' Day recess, I hope Republicans will continue confirming judicial nominees with bipartisan support, as Democrats did when we held the majority. In 2008, when I was chairman of the committee with a Republican President, we worked to confirm judicial nominees as late as September of the Presidential election year. In fact, Senate Democrats helped confirm all 10 of President Bush's district court nominees pending on the Senate floor in a single day by unanimous consent on September 26, 2008. This was similarly true in 2004, when I

was ranking member of the committee with a Republican President, and we worked to confirm nominees as late as September of the Presidential election year.

There are 19 judicial nominees awaiting confirmation on the Senate floor. The next judicial nominee pending after we return from the President's Day recess will be Waverly Crenshaw, an exceptional African-American district court nominee from Tennessee who has the support of his Republican home State Senators, Senators ALEXANDER and CORKER. I hope the Senators from Tennessee will be able to convince their majority leader to schedule the Tennessee nominee's vote to occur this month. This is an emergency judicial vacancy in their State, so it is clear that this position is sorely needed for Tennesseans to receive swift justice in the middle district of Tennessee.

I urge my fellow Senators to vote to confirm Judge Ebinger and look forward to working with my fellow Senators to ensure timely confirmation of the other judicial nominees pending before the Senate.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. GRASSLEY. I yield back time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Ebinger nomination?

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. SASSE), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER), and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN), and the Senator from

Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 83, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 18 Ex.]

YEAS—83

Alexander	Feinstein	Moran
Ayotte	Fischer	Murkowski
Baldwin	Flake	Murphy
Barrasso	Franken	Murray
Bennet	Gardner	Nelson
Blumenthal	Gillibrand	Paul
Booker	Grassley	Perdue
Boozman	Hatch	Peters
Brown	Heinrich	Portman
Burr	Heitkamp	Reed
Cantwell	Hirono	Reid
Capito	Hoeben	Risch
Cardin	Inhofe	Roberts
Carper	Isakson	Rounds
Casey	Kaine	Schatz
Cassidy	King	Schumer
Coats	Kirk	Scott
Cochran	Klobuchar	Sessions
Collins	Lankford	Shelby
Coons	Leahy	Stabenow
Corker	Lee	Sullivan
Cornyn	Manchin	Tester
Crapo	Markey	Thune
Daines	McCaskill	Udall
Donnelly	McConnell	Warner
Durbin	Menendez	Warren
Enzi	Merkley	Wyden
Ernst	Mikulski	

NOT VOTING—17

Blunt	Johnson	Tillis
Boxer	McCain	Toomey
Cotton	Rubio	Vitter
Cruz	Sanders	Whitehouse
Graham	Sasse	Wicker
Heller	Shaheen	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

The majority leader is recognized.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in 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.

The Senator from Minnesota.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today for the fifth time to ask unanimous consent for a vote for the Ambassadors to Norway and Sweden. Senator CRUZ has been objecting to this. I appreciate the bipartisan support for these nominees. They made it through the committees without any objections.

These are the 11th and 12th biggest investors in the United States of America. They are our allies. They are our allies in our fight against Russian aggression. Norway shares a border with Russia. Yet every major European