

Leslie Ashton, Cami Pease, Brittany Amador, Griffin Cannon, Nate Green, Brandon Kasprick, Sofia Kamali, Tom Maggiacomo, and, once again, staff director Elizabeth King.

From my personal office, I would like to thank Neil Campbell and Elyse Wasch.

Also, let me thank the floor staff and the leadership staff. Gary Myrick, Tricia Engle, Dan Tinsley, Brad Watt, Stephanie Paone, Nate Oursler, Rachel Jackson, and Liza Patterson. You have been part of this process for the last several weeks, and you have done a remarkable job. We thank you for that very, very much.

I would like to thank Senator INHOFE again for his partnership throughout this process, and I would thank Chairman SMITH and Ranking Member ROGERS from the House Armed Services Committee for their collaboration as well.

Finally, I urge all of my colleagues to vote for this excellent bill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to concur with amendment No. 4880 is withdrawn.

VOTE ON MOTION TO CONCUR

The question is on agreeing to the motion to concur.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, the yeas and nays are requested.

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. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS).

The result was announced—yeas 88, nays 11, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 499 Leg.]

YEAS—88

Baldwin	Grassley	Reed
Barrasso	Hagerty	Risch
Bennet	Hassan	Rosen
Blackburn	Hawley	Romney
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Rounds
Blunt	Hickenlooper	Rubio
Boozman	Hirono	Sasse
Brown	Hoeven	Schatz
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Schumer
Cantwell	Inhofe	Scott (FL)
Capito	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cardin	Kaine	Shelby
Carper	Kelly	Sinema
Casey	Kennedy	Smith
Cassidy	King	Stabenow
Collins	Klobuchar	Sullivan
Coons	Lankford	Tester
Cornyn	Leahy	Thune
Cortez Masto	Lujan	Tillis
Cotton	Manchin	Toomey
Cramer	Marshall	Tuberville
Crapo	McConnell	Van Hollen
Cruz	Menendez	Warner
Daines	Moran	Warnock
Duckworth	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murphy	Wicker
Ernst	Murray	Young
Feinstein	Ossoff	
Fischer	Peters	
Graham	Portman	

NAYS—11

Booker	Markey	Sanders
Braun	Merkley	Warren
Gillibrand	Padilla	Wyden
Lee	Paul	

NOT VOTING—1

Lummis

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

CHANGE OF VOTE

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, on rollcall vote No. 499, I voted aye. It was my intention to vote nay. Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to change my vote since it will not affect the outcome.

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

(The foregoing tally has been changed to reflect the above order.)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jennifer Sung, of Oregon, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

VOTE ON SUNG NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Sung nomination?

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The yeas and nays have been ordered.

Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS).

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 500 Ex.]

YEAS—50

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Reed
Bennet	Hirono	Rosen
Blumenthal	Kaine	Sanders
Booker	Kelly	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Leahy	Sinema
Carper	Lujan	Smith
Casey	Manchin	Stabenow
Coons	Markey	Tester
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Feinstein	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Graham	Padilla	Wyden
Heinrich	Peters	

NAYS—49

Barrasso	Braun	Collins
Blackburn	Burr	Cornyn
Blunt	Capito	Cotton
Boozman	Cassidy	Cramer

Crapo	Kennedy	Sasse
Cruz	Lankford	Scott (FL)
Daines	Lee	Scott (SC)
Ernst	Marshall	Shelby
Fischer	McConnell	Sullivan
Graham	Moran	Thune
Grassley	Murkowski	Tillis
Hagerty	Paul	Toomey
Hawley	Portman	Tuberville
Hoeven	Risch	Wicker
Hyde-Smith	Romney	Young
Inhofe	Rounds	
Johnson	Rubio	

NOT VOTING—1

Lummis

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the unfinished business.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Samantha D. Elliott, of New Hampshire, to be United States District Judge for the District of New Hampshire.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise today to seek unanimous consent to confirm Amanda Howe, President Biden's nominee to be the next Assistant Administrator for Mission Support at the Environmental Protection Agency.

I believe that my friend Senator LEE is going to object to this consent request. I hope when he does that he will explain his objection to this extremely qualified nominee.

I have known the nominee for more than 20 years and can speak directly to her talents and abilities. Amanda held a number of roles in the Commonwealth of Virginia, including serving as my assistant secretary of commerce and trade during my 10 years as Governor.

Amanda also served then-Governor Kaine's administration and Governor McAuliffe's administration and has held other leadership positions, including serving as deputy and then acting chief of staff to Mayor Bill de Blasio in New York.

Amanda led the planning and organization of the Queen's visit to Virginia in 2007, when we celebrated 400 years of connection to the UK. She helped plan the first-ever ticker tape parade for the U.S. women's soccer team to celebrate the first World Cup victory. She organized Pope Francis's visit to New York.

Beyond being a talented operator, Amanda also possesses a wealth of knowledge on issues under the EPA's purview, having worked on roles focused on renewable energy.

Amanda has been nominated to lead the EPA's Office of Mission Support, which directs the Agency's efforts to

improve efficiency, coordination, and customer experiences for internal and external stakeholders and the public, including the protection of EPA's facilities and other assets nationwide that are terribly important to our government; IT management, for example, inside the EPA.

It is my strong belief that Amanda has the requisite knowledge, expertise, and experience to carry out these critical functions at EPA.

I am also very proud of the fact—and I thank the chair and ranking member of the EPW committee—that she got passed out on a voice vote.

Now is the time to confirm Amanda so she can begin to oversee these critical management activities at the EPA.

So I, therefore, ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 560, Amanda Howe, of Virginia, to be Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I made communication with the EPA as to how to resolve a concern that I have. It should be an easy thing to resolve. I am waiting to hear back a response from them. In the meantime, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. LEE. Sure.

Mr. WARNER. It is my understanding your concern with the nominee is not about the nominee's qualifications.

Mr. LEE. It relates to a matter at the EPA.

Mr. WARNER. Thank you.

I thank the Senator from Utah.

Mr. President, I do hope this matter is resolved. I believe Amanda needs to be installed and doing her job. She has been up for this nomination literally for months.

I also feel this is just one more example—I think probably every Member of the Senate, including the Presiding Officer, has a number of individuals he supports. I know many of my colleagues on the Republican side have nominees they support. The kind of blanket holds that are taking place on way too many of our nominees means that this President can't put in place his team.

The Presiding Officer was a Governor. He is about to be replaced by another Governor. I was a Governor. I can't imagine running an administration a year into my term if I didn't

have two-thirds of my appointees serving in office.

The Presiding Officer, I know—I will end very briefly—is an extraordinarily valuable member of the Intelligence Committee. We see America's national security concerns on a daily basis. Those national security concerns will be better met when every major nation in the world has an American Ambassador. It is great that we have State Department personnel, but without that Ambassador in these offices—Amanda is not up for ambassadorship, but there are a host of Ambassadors in critical nations that need to be confirmed.

I hope—as we wind down these last few days of this session before the end of the year, I implore my friends on the Republican side, give these folks who have waited for months and months and months a kind of assurance of their ability to serve, especially when they are noncontroversial. Please remove their objections. Stop objecting. Let's let the government have these people, personnel in place. I hope Amanda Howe will be one of those. I look forward to my friend from Utah resolving this issue.

I thank the Presiding Officer for listening to my extra 5 minutes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). The Senator from Iowa.

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, we all know that our country is facing a drug crisis. I think it is pretty well known, as the CDC has reported, that over 100,000 Americans died from a drug overdose over a recent 12-month period.

Although fentanyl drugs are heavily responsible for this, we are battling the fight on many fronts. For instance, synthetic drug use is evolving and, of course, very dangerous; same thing for methamphetamine, which is very much on the rise.

Too many lives are being lost. That is why I have been busy working on legislation to stop this epidemic, bills like this title of a bill: Stop the Importation and Manufacturing of Synthetic Analogues Act of 2021.

For too long, criminals have been skirting the law. Do you know how they do it? By changing the chemical makeup of a drug. They keep ahead of regulation-writing. They keep ahead of Congress making laws. Congress is kind of in a situation of playing the deadly game of whack-a-mole as law enforcement tries to keep pace with savvy drug dealers. My bipartisan bill nips this deadly cycle in the bud. This bill would control synthetic substances similar to known drugs while the more time-consuming testing, research, and analysis can be performed.

Also, methamphetamine abuse and use is very concerning. The volume and purity of meth smuggled from Mexico into the United States is at a near all-time high. To address this dire situation, I joined with Senator FEINSTEIN

of California to reintroduce the Methamphetamine Response Act. This bill declares meth an emerging threat and requires the Office of National Drug Control Policy to develop and implement a national plan to prevent meth addiction and overdoses. This is a necessary step to combat meth in Iowa and, of course, in the rest of the country.

The Senate passed, very recently, the Meth Response Act. In fact, it was passed this week. The House must act quickly to get the bill to President Biden's desk. Meth is rampant, and action should not be delayed.

I also joined with Senator FEINSTEIN to reintroduce a cannabidiol and marijuana research bill to encourage scientific and medical research on marijuana. Instead of rushing into legalizing or decriminalizing marijuana, we need a better understanding of that plant and its potential benefits but also to know what the side effects are. Let's not put the cart before the horse here in the Senate.

I have also been active as cochairman of the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control. Along with the chairman, Senator WHITEHOUSE, we held hearings examining the Federal response to the drug overdose epidemic and the nexus between illicit drug trade and corruption.

I also convened a field hearing in Iowa to hear from grassroots, the experts there and the constituents there, about our own State's efforts—drug control, prevention, and treatment efforts. At that hearing, we had a sad story by a father, Rod Courtney from North Liberty, IA, sharing his story of losing his son Chad 5 years ago due to fentanyl. Rod's powerful testimony is just one instance of the struggles families face from drug abuse.

Stories like Chad's are why I sent multiple letters to the Biden administration to proactively and permanently schedule fentanyl-related substances. We did get a positive response. I am glad to see that the Biden administration has taken my advice and probably the advice of a lot of other Senators as well and recommended permanently scheduling fentanyl drugs.

Yet the administration proposes shielding fentanyl dealers from mandatory minimums. These dealers are potential killers. This watered-down position flies in the face of our current crisis with fentanyl. We have to keep our neighborhoods safe and must hold poison peddlers accountable. That is particularly true with fentanyl offenders.

I am happy to say that, with my support, Congress has extended the life-saving scheduling authority into February, but don't be fooled—we still need a permanent solution.

With the close of 2021 on the horizon, it is natural to reflect. One hundred thousand overdose deaths is an unspeakable tragedy. Each loss is a loved one, a friend, or a neighbor. We must find solutions to this crisis, and I look forward to being part of that solution.