

# **BUSINESS MEETING**

*Wednesday, June 18, 2025*

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:41 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James E. Risch, presiding.

**Present:** Senators Risch [presiding], Ricketts, McCormick, Daines, Hagerty, Paul, Scott, Curtis, Shaheen, Merkley, and Rosen.

## **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES E. RISCH, U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO**

**The Chairman:** The United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations will come to order.

We have a business meeting to take up, and then we have a hearing. And the Ranking Member and I have worked on the agenda for the business meeting. And we have in front of us 10 of our nominees that are ready to go. We have decided we're going to have a voice vote on each of them, except we're going to have a roll call vote on Kapur and Rinaldi. The rest will be by a voice vote, if that is agreeable with the committee and with the Ranking Member. It appears to be so.

Let's start with Jacob Helberg of Florida to be Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and Environment. Is there a motion to send it to the floor?

**Senator Ricketts:** So moved.

**The Chairman:** It's been moved.

**Senator Scott of Florida:** Seconded.

**The Chairman:** Seconded that we send Jacob Helberg to the floor with a due pass recommendation. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

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[Chorus of ayes.]

**The Chairman:** Opposed say nay.

**Senator Merkley:** No.

**The Chairman:** Do you want to be recorded as nay?

**Senator Merkley:** Yes.

**The Chairman:** Okay.

**Senator Shaheen:** Mr. Chairman, I have some other people who would like to be recorded as no. Can I—

**The Chairman:** Senator, I wonder if we could—yes, obviously, we'll record them as no, but can we just submit that?

**Senator Shaheen:** Sure. We're happy to do that.

**The Chairman:** If that's okay. All right. Let's take all the voice votes first.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The following Senators voted No on the Jacob Helberg vote: Senators Murphy, Merkley, Schatz, Van Hollen, and Duckworth.]

**The Chairman:** Benjamin Black of New York to be Chief Executive Officer of the United States International Development Finance Corporation. Is there a motion?

**Senator Ricketts:** So moved.

**The Chairman:** Moved. Is there a second?

**Senator Hagerty:** Second.

**The Chairman:** Seconded. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

**The Chairman:** Opposed, nay

[No response.]

The ayes have it. The floor will be so notified.

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[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The following Senators voted No on the Benjamin Black vote:

Senators Murphy, Merkley, Schatz, Van Hollen, and Duckworth.

**The Chairman:** Howard Brodie of Florida to be Ambassador Extraordinary of the United States of America to the Republic of Finland. Is there a motion?

**Senator Ricketts:** So moved.

**The Chairman:** Seconded?

**Senator Hagerty:** Second.

**The Chairman:** It's been moved and seconded. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

**The Chairman:** Opposed, nay.

[No response.]

The ayes have it.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The following Senators voted No on the Howard Brodie vote:

Senators Murphy, Merkley, Schatz, Van Hollen, and Duckworth.]

**The Chairman:** Luigi Rinaldi of New York to be Ambassador——

**Senator Shaheen:** Mr. Chairman, I——

**The Chairman:** I'm sorry. That's a roll call.

**Senator Shaheen:** Roll call.

**The Chairman:** I'm sorry. Nicholas Merrick of Texas to be Ambassador to the Czech Republic. Is there motion?

**Senator Ricketts:** So moved.

**The Chairman:** Is there a second?

**Senator Hagerty:** Second.

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It's been seconded. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

**The Chairman:** Opposed, nay.

[No response.]

The ayes have it.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The following Senators voted No on the Nicholas Merrick vote:

Senators Murphy, Kaine, Merkley, Schatz, Van Hollen, and Duckworth.]

**The Chairman:** Arthur—oops, I'm sorry. Thank you, Senator. We'll have those recorded, too.

Arthur Fisher of North Carolina to be Ambassador to Austria. Is there motion?

**Senator Scott of Florida:** So moved.

**Senator Ricketts:** Second.

**The Chairman:** Seconded. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

**The Chairman:** Opposed, nay.

[No response.]

The ayes have it.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The following Senators voted No on the Arthur Fisher vote:

Senators Murphy, Kaine, Merkley, Schatz, Van Hollen, and Duckworth.]

**The Chairman:** Roman Pipko of Florida to be Ambassador to Estonia. Is there a motion?

**Senator Ricketts:** So moved.

**Senator Hagerty:** Second.

**The Chairman:** Moved and seconded. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

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[Chorus of ayes.]

**The Chairman:** Opposed, nay.

[No response.]

The ayes have it.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The following Senators voted No on the Roman Pipko vote:

Senators Murphy, Kaine, Merkley, Schatz, Van Hollen, and Duckworth.

**The Chairman:** Stacey Feinberg of California to be the Ambassador to Luxembourg.

Is there a motion?

**Senator Ricketts:** So moved.

**Senator Hagerty:** Second.

**The Chairman:** Been moved and seconded. All those in favor signify by saying aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

**The Chairman:** Opposed, nay.

[No response.]

The ayes have it.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The following Senators voted No on the Stacey Feinberg vote:

Senators Murphy, Kaine, Merkley, Schatz, Van Hollen, and Duckworth.]

**The Chairman:** We'll now take up three on a roll call vote. We'll start with an Andrew Puzder. Is there a motion?

**Senator Ricketts:** So moved.

**Senator Hagerty:** Second.

**The Chairman:** It's been moved and seconded that we send Andrew Puzder to the floor with a due pass recommendation.

Senator Shaheen.

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**Senator Shaheen:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, despite my concerns about some of his responses at the hearing, I didn't get a chance to ask him questions, and I was willing to forego some of his past issues around with his first wife because she has been willing to forego that.

But we just got his responses to questions. Now, this is someone who's being submitted to the Ambassador to the EU. The EU is probably one of our most important allies, if not the most important ally. And the responses that we got from Mr. Puzder are just insulting. I mean, they're one sentence. These are serious questions.

"If confirmed, would you advocate for the seizure of Russian assets in Europe to help rebuild Ukraine?" He basically says, "The United States has discussed with the G7 and the European Union. The disposition of immobilized Russian sovereign assets and the Administration has made clear all options remain on the table." That is not an answer to an issue that the Congress has overwhelmingly supported.

So, I'm going to vote against Mr. Puzder, and I think that view is shared by most of my Democratic colleagues. But I would hope that all of us on this committee would demand that people who come before us, who are being appointed to these critical positions, take them seriously enough to give us real answers when we have serious questions that we're asking.

So, I am very concerned about that. I'm willing to reconsider my vote when it comes to the floor if he shows that he's really serious about this job. But clearly by his answers, he's not serious.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Shaheen. I think we've all been frustrated over the years from responses from time to time. I think that your criticism is well taken. I still think we should confirm him, and I'm going to vote to confirm him. I will urge that he sit

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in with you and talk through some of these because I agree with you. First of all, this is an incredibly important position being Ambassador to the European Union.

Is there further debate on the on the nomination? If not, the clerk will call the roll.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Ricketts?

**Senator Ricketts:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. McCormick?

**Senator McCormick:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Daines?

**Senator Daines:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Hagerty?

**Senator Hagerty:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Barrasso?

**The Chairman:** Aye, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Lee?

**The Chairman:** Aye, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Paul?

**Senator Paul:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cruz?

**The Chairman:** Aye, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Scott?

**Senator Scott of Florida:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Curtis?

**Senator Curtis:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cornyn?

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**The Chairman:** Aye, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mrs. Shaheen?

**Senator Shaheen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Coons?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Murphy?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Kaine?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Merkley?

**Senator Merkley:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Booker?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Schatz?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Van Hollen?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Duckworth?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Rosen?

**Senator Rosen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman?

**The Chairman:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman, the ayes are 12, the nays are 10.



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**The Chairman:** The motion has passed. The nomination will be referred to the floor with the due pass.

We'll take up Paul Kapur of California for Assistant Secretary of State for Southern Asian Affairs. Is there a motion?

**Senator Ricketts:** So moved.

**Senator Scott of Florida:** Second.

**The Chairman:** It's been moved and seconded that we send Paul Kapur to the floor with the due pass recommendation. Is there debate on this nomination?

Senator Shaheen.

**Senator Shaheen:** Mr. Chairman, again, I appreciate Paul Kapur's expertise, but I found his answer on Afghanistan totally unacceptable and not appropriate for somebody who's planning to take over the position on South Asian affairs. The fact that he's willing to send Afghans back home and not willing to acknowledge the threat that the Taliban poses to those people who have risked their lives and their families' lives to help our American servicemen and women during the war in Afghanistan is just totally unacceptable in my mind. And, again, I think all of us should be concerned about that.

The support for Afghans to come to the United States after they served with our troops, whether it was as an interpreter or in other roles to help the United States, was something that was a bipartisan position. It was something that I have worked on with John McCain for many years. There are others on this committee who have worked on that.

And the fact that we would put somebody in that position who didn't have the backbone to stand up and say that the Taliban are a threat, and we shouldn't be sending Afghans back because we know they're going to get killed, is not acceptable.

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So, I intend to vote against him. I would hope that if he's approved, which appears, based on where the rest of this committee is, that will happen, but I would hope that people would share with him concerns about what that position means to future countries who we might be asking to join us and help our men and women on the ground in combat. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator. I'm sure that Mr. Kapur is going to get a lot of advice in directions that you have just lobbied for here and spoke for as we go forward. I'm going to vote in favor of Mr. Kapur.

Is there further debate?

**Senator Merkley:** Mr. Chairman?

**The Chairman:** Senator Merkley.

**Senator Merkley:** I think we should recognize that when we fail to stand by those who stood by us in Afghanistan, we're not just betraying our implicit promise to them, but we are endangering American enterprises in the future around the world where we need the cooperation and support of local individuals. If we betray now those who were so critical in supporting our mission and often supporting and saving the lives of Americans, then why should anybody partner with us in the future? His position is completely unacceptable, and I would hope we'd all recognize that and not forward this nomination.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Merkley.

Is there further debate on the nomination? If not, the clerk will call the roll.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Ricketts?

**Senator Ricketts:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. McCormick?

**Senator McCormick:** Aye.

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**The Clerk:** Mr. Daines?

**Senator Daines:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Hagerty?

**Senator Hagerty:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Barrasso?

**The Chairman:** Aye, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Lee?

**The Chairman:** Aye, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Paul?

**Senator Paul:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cruz?

**The Chairman:** Aye, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Scott?

**Senator Scott of Florida:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Curtis?

**Senator Curtis:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cornyn?

**The Chairman:** Aye, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mrs. Shaheen?

**Senator Shaheen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Coons?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Murphy?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

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**The Clerk:** Mr. Kaine?

**Senator Shaheen:** Aye, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Merkley?

**Senator Merkley:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Booker?

**Senator Booker:** No response.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Schatz?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Van Hollen?

**Senator Shaheen:** I'm sorry. Mr. Schatz is a no, by proxy. I need to correct. Mr.

Kaine was an aye, by proxy. Mr. Van Hollen is no, by proxy. You want to start over?

**The Clerk:** We'll start with Senator Booker.

Senator Booker?

**Senator Shaheen:** Senator Booker is no, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Schatz?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Van Hollen?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Duckworth?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Rosen?

**Senator Rosen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman?

**The Chairman:** Aye.

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**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman, the ayes are 13, the nays are 9.

**The Chairman:** The motion has passed. The nomination be sent to the floor with the committee's recommendation.

Lastly, we have Luigi Rinaldi of New York be Ambassador to Uruguay. Is there a motion?

**Senator Ricketts:** So moved.

**The Chairman:** Second?

**Senator Scott of Florida:** Second.

**The Chairman:** It's been moved and seconded that Mr. Rinaldi be sent to the floor with a due pass. Is there a debate?

Senator Shaheen.

**Senator Shaheen:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now, again, Mr. Rinaldi was not someone I had the opportunity to question because I wasn't able to stay at his hearing the full time. But Uruguay has become a very important ally in Latin America, and it's very distressing that Mr. Rinaldi didn't seem to have any understanding at all about the country, about the role of ambassador, about what we need to do going forward. So, I intend to vote against him.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Is there further debate? If not, the clerk will call roll.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Ricketts?

**Senator Ricketts:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. McCormick?

**Senator McCormick:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Daines?

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**Senator Daines:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Hagerty?

**Senator Hagerty:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Barrasso?

**The Chairman:** Aye, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Lee?

**The Chairman:** Aye, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Paul?

**Senator Paul:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cruz?

**The Chairman:** Aye, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Scott?

**Senator Scott of Florida:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Curtis?

**Senator Curtis:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Cornyn?

**The Chairman:** Aye, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mrs. Shaheen?

**Senator Shaheen:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Coons?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Murphy?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Kaine?

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**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Merkley?

**Senator Merkley:** No.

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by—oops.

[Laughter.]

**Senator Shaheen:** I'm glad we are in agreement.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Booker?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Schatz?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Van Hollen?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Duckworth?

**Senator Shaheen:** No, by proxy.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Rosen?

**Senator Rosen:** No, by person.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman?

**The Chairman:** Aye.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chairman, the ayes are 12, the nays are 10.

**The Chairman:** Thank you. The motion has passed. Mr. Rinaldi is to be sent to the floor with a due pass recommendation.

That concludes our business meeting. Thank you to the members for showing up as quickly as we can to move these. I know everybody's got lots of moving parts here, but we appreciate your cooperation. And that concludes our business meeting.

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**[Whereupon, at 10:54 a.m., the meeting was adjourned.]**