

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
Business Meeting
Thursday, November 20, 2025

BUSINESS MEETING

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U.S. SENATE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:16 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James E. Risch, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Risch [presiding], Ricketts, Daines, Hagerty, Barrasso, Lee, Paul, Cruz, Scott, Curtis, Cornyn, Shaheen, Coons, Murphy, and Merkley.

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

The Chairman: Okay. The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations will come to order. We are going to have a business meeting and then we have a hearing, so we will start with the business meeting. We have four nominees before us. According to the direction, stern direction, of the Parliamentarian, we have got to take them one at a time, unfortunately.

So we will start with Brent Christensen of Virginia, to be Ambassador to the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Is there a motion?

Senator Ricketts: So moved.

The Chairman: Is there a second?

Senator Shaheen: Second.

The Chairman: Is there debate?

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Being no debate, the clerk will call the roll.

The Clerk: Mr. Ricketts?

Senator Ricketts: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. McCormick?

[No response.]

The Clerk: Mr. Daines?

Senator Daines: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Hagerty?

Senator Hagerty: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Barrasso?

Senator Barrasso: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Lee?

Senator Lee: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Paul?

Senator Paul: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Cruz?

Senator Cruz: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Scott?

Senator Scott of Florida: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Curtis?

Senator Curtis: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Cornyn?

Senator Cornyn: Aye.

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The Clerk: Mrs. Shaheen?

Senator Shaheen: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Coons?

Senator Coons: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Murphy?

Senator Murphy: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Kaine?

Senator Shaheen: Aye by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Merkley?

Senator Shaheen: Aye by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Booker?

Senator Shaheen: Aye by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Schatz?

Senator Shaheen: Aye by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Van Hollen?

Senator Shaheen: Aye by proxy.

The Clerk: Ms. Duckworth?

Senator Shaheen: Aye by proxy.

The Clerk: Ms. Rosen?

Senator Shaheen: Aye by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: Aye. The clerk will report.

The Clerk: Mr. Chairman, the yeas are 21, the noes are 0.

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The Chairman: The motion is passed.

We consider Benjamin Leon, Jr., of Florida, to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Spain. Is there a motion?

Senator Ricketts: So moved.

The Chairman: Is there a second?

[Chorus of "second."]

The Chairman: It has been moved and seconded. Is there debate?

Being no debate, the clerk will call the roll.

The Clerk: Mr. Ricketts?

Senator Ricketts: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. McCormick?

[No response.]

The Clerk: Mr. Daines?

Senator Daines: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Hagerty?

Senator Hagerty: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Barrasso?

Senator Barrasso: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Lee?

Senator Lee: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Paul?

Senator Paul: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Cruz?

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Senator Cruz: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Scott?

Senator Scott of Florida: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Curtis?

Senator Curtis: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Cornyn?

Senator Cornyn: Aye.

The Clerk: Mrs. Shaheen?

Senator Shaheen: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Coons?

Senator Coons: No.

The Clerk: Mr. Murphy?

Senator Murphy: No.

The Clerk: Mr. Kaine?

Senator Shaheen: Aye by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Merkley?

Senator Shaheen: No by proxy.

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.

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The Clerk: Ms. Duckworth?

Senator Shaheen: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Ms. Rosen?

Senator Shaheen: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: Aye. The clerk will report.

The Clerk: Mr. Chairman, the yeas are 13, the noes are 8.

The Chairman: The motion is passed.

We will now take up Leo Brent Bozell III, to be Ambassador to South Africa. Is there a motion?

Senator Ricketts: So moved.

[Chorus of "so moved."]

The Chairman: Moved and seconded that he be sent to the floor with a do pass recommendation. Is there is debate?

There is apparently some debate, lots of debate.

Senator Shaheen: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I have serious concerns about Mr. Bozell's ability to serve as Ambassador to South Africa. He refused to even voice an opinion on the United States instituting a race-based refugee policy, and he continues to perpetuate the false narrative, white farmer genocide in South Africa, which is not happening. Mr. Bozell is woefully unprepared to be Ambassador to one of the U.S.'s largest strategic partners on the African continent. So I intend to vote "no" on Mr. Bozell's nomination, and I think most of my colleagues on the Democratic side will do the same.

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The Chairman: Thank you, Senator. Senator Coons.

Senator Coons: Mr. Chairman, I also wanted to convey my opposition to this nomination. Mr. Bozell continues to perpetuate a false story that there is a targeted genocide against Afrikaners. I recently spoke to several dozen Afrikaner leaders from South Africa who have sent a letter to us saying this is being done in their name, but it is profoundly divisive and destructive within South Africa. There are elevated levels of violence in South Africa, but they are not specifically targeted at the White minority. And for President Trump to focus our refugee admissions solely or largely on this one country and this population is both historical and unconstructive.

The Chairman: Senator Murphy.

Senator Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You are hearing every Democrat present raise objection over this nominee, in part because of the underlying policy, which is absolutely exceptional in American history. The idea that we are about to impose a racial profile on a refugee program is abhorrent, and this committee should do oversight over that decision before it creates a permanent stain on America's reputation in the world.

I would also just note that in follow-up questions with Mr. Bozell, I asked him a simple question which was to opine on whether he would oppose or support the imposition of restrictions on Black American citizens to vote, and his answer to this committee was that his personal opinions were not relevant to his nomination.

You have already robbed from Democrats the ability to have an open

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debate on the floor of representatives on individual nominees, and now nominees are coming here and basically saying they are immune from discussing their personal views on pretty serious, weighty matters. I just hope that this is not the future of our nominees' willingness to share with us their views, and I would just reiterate my hope that we have a fuller committee discussion on the underlying refugee policy, very concerning to many of us on this committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator. Is there further debate on the President's nomination of Mr. Bozell?

There being none, debate will be closed, and the clerk will call the roll.

The Clerk: Mr. Ricketts?

Senator Ricketts: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. McCormick?

[No response.]

The Clerk: Mr. Daines?

Senator Daines: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Hagerty?

Senator Hagerty: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Barrasso?

Senator Barrasso: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Lee?

Senator Lee: Aye.

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The Clerk: Mr. Paul?

Senator Paul: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Cruz?

Senator Cruz: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Scott?

Senator Scott of Florida: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Curtis?

Senator Curtis: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Cornyn?

Senator Cornyn: Aye.

The Clerk: Mrs. Shaheen?

Senator Shaheen: No.

The Clerk: Mr. Coons?

Senator Coons: No.

The Clerk: Mr. Murphy?

Senator Murphy: No.

The Clerk: Mr. Kaine?

Senator Shaheen: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Merkley?

Senator Shaheen: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Booker?

Senator Shaheen: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Schatz?

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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 Shaheen: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: Aye. The clerk will report.

The Clerk: Mr. Chairman, the yeas are 11, the noes are 10.

The Chairman: The motion is passed. Mr. Bozell will be referred to the floor with a do pass recommendation.

We finally have the nomination of Ms. Morvared Namdarkhan, of Texas, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs. Is there discussion?

Senator Ricketts: Do you want a motion first?

The Chairman: Yes, let's have a motion.

Senator Ricketts: So moved.

Senator Lee: Second.

The Chairman: Moved and seconded. Now is there discussion?

Senator Shaheen: Yes.

The Chairman: Senator Shaheen.

Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Namdarkhan is going to take on what is perhaps the most important public-facing role at the

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State Department, because her role deals with the safety and security of Americans overseas, as the head of the Consular Affairs Bureau. It requires regular engagement with Congress to ensure that our constituents are well served.

And in New Hampshire we have both a Visa and a Passport Center, so we have a number of employees who are very engaged in these responsibilities. And I have some reservations about Ms. Namdarkhan because of her tenure in the first Trump administration, where she actually left her job because she was about to be disciplined. However, she indicated in her hearing a commitment to make sure this bureau runs well. I am going to hold her to that. I am going to vote for her. But I am going to hold her to the commitment that she has made to engage with this committee, with members of the Senate and Congress, and to make sure that this bureau is responsive to our constituents.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Shaheen. And she did make those commitments in the hearing, and like you I feel strongly that this is a really important position for our constituents, for us as we deal with our constituents. I am sure that she knows that we are going to be holding her to that standard, and there is no doubt about that.

Is there further debate?

There being no further debate, the clerk will call the roll.

The Clerk: Mr. Ricketts?

Senator Ricketts: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. McCormick?

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[No response.]

The Clerk: Mr. Daines?

Senator Daines: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Hagerty?

Senator Hagerty: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Barrasso?

Senator Barrasso: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Lee?

Senator Lee: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Paul?

Senator Paul: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Cruz?

Senator Cruz: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Scott?

Senator Scott of Florida: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Curtis?

Senator Curtis: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Cornyn?

Senator Cornyn: Aye.

The Clerk: Mrs. Shaheen?

Senator Shaheen: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Coons?

Senator Coons: No.

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The Clerk: Mr. Murphy?

Senator Murphy: No.

The Clerk: Mr. Kaine?

Senator Shaheen: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Merkley?

Mr. 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 Shaheen: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: Aye. The clerk will report.

The Clerk: Mr. Chairman, the yeas are 12, the noes are 9.

The Chairman: The motion is passed. The nomination will be referred to the floor with a do pass recommendation. And thank you. Senator Shaheen.

Senator Shaheen: Mr. Chairman, I have a statement for the record that I would like to introduce on the vote.

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The Chairman: That will be published in the record. Thank you.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Senator Shaheen follows:]

STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY
RANKING MEMBER JEANNE SHAHEEN

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We are considering a handful of important nominees today.

One of the most significant to my constituents in New Hampshire—and I'm sure in Idaho as well—is Consular Affairs.

When Americans need passports or urgent help overseas, Consular Affairs is the first line of response.

The person in this role serves constituents nationwide and works with every member of Congress, regardless of politics. The need for diplomats who serve all Americans has never been greater.

It is a standard the nominee to South Africa does not meet.

Not only because he amplified the false narrative that white farmers in South Africa are facing “genocide”. But because he repeatedly refused to answer whether the U.S. should institute a race-based refugee policy.

Ambassadors must bridge divides and de-escalate tension for the sake of our national security.

I don't think Mr. Bozell can do that.

The Administration can do better. It can also do better when it comes to advancing career nominees.

I'm glad we have another career nominee before us today. But over the last year, we have considered only *seven* career nominees and seen just *five* confirmed. In *11* months.

Mr. Chairman, you committed to me that you would press this with the Administration, and I believe that you have. But clearly, there is still room for improvement.

There are dozens of posts typically held by experienced career public servants that have no Senate-confirmed ambassador.

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Without them in place, we are only undermining our own U.S.
national security.

We need to do better.

Thank you.

The Chairman: So with that we will move to the hearing we have
scheduled for this morning.

[Whereupon, at 9:25 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]