

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
Business Meeting
Wednesday, March 12, 2025

BUSINESS MEETING

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

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

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:09 a.m., in S-116, The Capitol, Hon. James E. Risch, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Risch, Ricketts, Daines, Hagerty, Barrasso, Paul, Scott, Curtis, Cornyn, Coons, Murphy, and Merkley.

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

The Chairman: The Committee will come to order. Thank you all for being here.

We have a business meeting to consider three appointments to send to the floor. All of us here have other things to do, not myself as much as others who have important positions on other committees. So what we are going to do is to hold the vote, and then we will discuss it, and I will stay here and the Committee will stay in session for as long as anybody wants to talk. And I have discussed it with Senator Coons, and we are going to -- we are going to handle these one at a time because the vote could be different on them.

So the Chair would entertain a motion to send Christopher Landau of Maryland to be Deputy Secretary of State of the full United States. Is there a motion?

Voice: So moved.

The Chairman: So moved. Is there a second?

Voices: Second.

The Chairman: All right. Let's see. You want to move --

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Senator Coons: Could I just briefly make an opening comment? I am here in the absence of Senator Shaheen. I would ask unanimous consent that -- she has a statement for the record she would like to submit about these nominees and about the business meeting.

The Chairman: Of course.

Senator Coons: I would appreciate that. She has made an announcement this morning she is not seeking reelection. I will speak to her outstanding record of leadership on foreign policy after we conduct these votes.

[The prepared statement of Senator Shaheen follows:]

Statement Submitted for the Record by
Ranking Member Jeanne Shaheen

The three nominees we are considering today will have enormous influence over the direction of American foreign policy: Two Deputy Secretaries of State and our Ambassador to NATO—one of our most important alliances.

I appreciate the nominees' commitments to work with me and this committee. In particular, in advance of today's vote I sought commitments regarding their support and advancement of career nominees at the Department, commitments to update me and this committee on the administration's efforts to restore foreign assistance critical to U.S. interests, and remain fully engaged with the Committee on NATO.

Based on this, I intend to support all three nominees today. If they are confirmed, I will certainly hold them to these commitments.

**STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER A. COONS,
U.S. SENATOR FROM DELAWARE**

Senator Coons: I am gravely concerned about our role in the world, the place development and diplomacy play in it, and would urge my colleagues to reflect, as we move towards the continuing resolution and as we confirm or vote on these nominees, that we reflect on the critical role that the State Department plays in sustaining our place in an increasingly troubled world.

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The Chairman: Thank you.

Senator Murphy: Mr. Chair?

The Chairman: Senator Murphy.

Senator Murphy: Mr. Chairman, as you know, a few of us requested to have these votes held over, and the intent was to raise with the Chairman the extraordinary changes that are happening inside the State Department and USAID, and the lack of any public inquiry in this committee to help not just members, but the broader public understand what is happening.

Our request was to have Senator -- excuse me -- Secretary of State Rubio come before the Committee so that we could have a conversation about what is happening at USAID and the State Department and the impacts on national security. Is there any update or any chance that this committee is going to have a public open hearing to talk about what is happening inside our national security structure? I know that there is a private meeting, but that is not a substitute to use this committee as a means to have a public dialogue. This should not all be happening in secret.

The Chairman: Is that a question?

Senator Murphy: Yeah, if there is --

The Chairman: The answer is yes. So anything further?

Senator Murphy: Yes, there --

The Chairman: We will have -- certainly the Secretary of State will come before this committee at some point in time, but right now he has got his hands full.

Senator Murphy: Is there any time frame on that?

The Chairman: There is no time. The clerk will call the roll.

The Clerk: Mr. Ricketts?

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Senator Ricketts: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. McCormick?

The Chairman: Aye by proxy.

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?

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: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Curtis?

Senator Curtis: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Cornyn?

Senator Cornyn: Aye.

The Clerk: Mrs. Shaheen?

Senator Coons: Sorry. Aye by proxy.

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The Clerk: Mr. Coons?

Senator Coons: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Murphy?

Senator Murphy: No.

The Clerk: Mr. Kaine?

Senator Coons: Aye by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Merkley?

Senator Merkley: No.

The Clerk: Mr. Booker?

Senator Coons: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Schatz?

Senator Coons: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Van Hollen?

Senator Coons: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Ms. Duckworth?

Senator Coons: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Ms. Rosen?

Senator Coons: Aye by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: Aye. The clerk will report.

The Clerk: Mr. Chairman, the ayes are 16. The noes are 6.

The Chairman: The motion is passed. Mr. Landau will be referred to the floor of the United States Senate.

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We now have before us the Honorable Michael Rigas of Virginia to be Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources. Is there a motion?

Voice: Aye.

The Chairman: So moved. Second?

Voice: Aye.

The Chairman: There has been a motion and a second that we send Mr. Rigas to the floor of the United States Senate.

The clerk will call the roll.

The Clerk: Mr. Ricketts?

Senator Ricketts: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. McCormick?

The Chairman: Aye by proxy.

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?

The Chairman: Aye by proxy.

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The Clerk: Mr. Paul?

Senator Paul: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Cruz?

The Chairman: Aye by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Scott?

Senator Scott: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Curtis?

Senator Curtis: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Cornyn?

Senator Cornyn: Aye.

The Clerk: Mrs. Shaheen?

Senator Coons: Aye by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Coons?

Senator Coons: No.

The Clerk: Mr. Murphy?

Senator Murphy: No.

The Clerk: Mr. Kaine?

Senator Coons: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Merkley?

Senator Merkley: No.

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The Clerk: Mr. Booker?

Senator Coons: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Schatz?

Senator Coons: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Van Hollen?

Senator Coons: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Ms. Duckworth?

Senator Coons: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Ms. Rosen?

Senator Coons: No by proxy.

The Clerk: And Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: Aye. The clerk will report.

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

The Chairman: The motion has passed. Mr. Rigas will be referred to the floor of the United States Senate.

We now have before us the Honorable Matthew Whitaker of Iowa to be United States Permanent Representative on the Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, with the rank and status of ambassador, et cetera. Is there a motion to confirm?

Senator Hagerty: So moved.

The Chairman: Second?

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Voice: Second.

The Chairman: Moved and seconded. The clerk will call the roll.

The Clerk: Mr. Ricketts?

Senator Ricketts: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. McCormick?

The Chairman: Aye by proxy.

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?

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: Aye.

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The Clerk: Mr. Curtis?

Senator Curtis: Aye.

The Clerk: Mr. Cornyn?

Senator Cornyn: Aye.

The Clerk: Mrs. Shaheen?

Senator Coons: Aye by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Coons?

Senator Coons: No.

The Clerk: Mr. Murphy?

Senator Murphy: No.

The Clerk: Mr. Kaine?

Senator Coons: Mr. Kaine abstains.

The Clerk: Mr. Merkley?

Senator Merkley: No.

The Clerk: Mr. Booker?

Senator Coons: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Schatz?

Senator Coons: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Mr. Van Hollen?

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Senator Coons: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Ms. Duckworth?

Senator Coons: No by proxy.

The Clerk: Ms. Rosen?

Senator Coons: No by proxy.

The Clerk: And Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: Aye. The clerk will report.

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

The Chairman: The motion is passed. Mr. Whitaker will be referred to the floor of the United States Senate. Thank you all for being here promptly and getting through this as quick as possible. The floor is now open. Senator Coons?

Senator Coons: Mr. Chairman, if I could, I have voted for Mr. Landau -- Ambassador Landau -- in respect for his life as a member of a Foreign Service family: his father served as Ambassador to three countries, his own experience as Ambassador to Mexico, and a conversation we had about his view of the Foreign Service, the role of the State Department, and the path forward.

I am choosing to vote against Mr. Rigas and Mr. Whitaker based on concerns about their relevant experience, willingness to move through a review of the workforce in an orderly and disciplined and respectful way, and lack of relevant diplomatic experience. But I felt that we had a respectful and a constructive confirmation hearing, good engagements with them. I will say I was encouraged by Mr. Rigas committing to follow the rule of law, although that should not be an unusual thing, but given ongoing litigation about the illegal and unconstitutional crushing of USAID, I thought it important.

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And Mr. Whitaker provided critical reassurances about his view and, reportedly, the President's view of NATO.

I do think that we are in an unprecedented moment in terms of what has happened with USAID. I do think that Secretary Rubio should be in front of us and we should have engagements with him as critical decisions are being made about the future of Ukraine and NATO, our engagements with China, our unilaterally taking away one of our most powerful tools: the development engagement around the world. As I continue to hear reports of China taking advantage of the opening we are creating, of the public health risks that are being posed to us and to much of the world, of our abandonment of a longstanding mission to combat trafficking, I do think that we should have the opportunity to hear about how American interests are being put at risk.

And I remain gravely concerned that what is about to happen in the State Department is what happened last night to the Department of Education and what happened over the previous weeks to USAID. If the State Department goes through a similar, across-the-board, ill-considered, rushed cut that closes embassies and lays off thousands, I think the harm to this committee, to our Nation's interests, to the Department of State, and to the families who have served at home and abroad for decades will be lasting. If, on the other hand, we can manage a process where, in consultation with this committee and Congress, the Administration works with us to find appropriate reductions and realignments that meet the moment, I look forward to working you and the Ranking Member of the Committee in achieving that, but I am literally holding my breath about what comes next for the U.S. Department of State. Thank you.

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The Chairman: Thank you, Senator. Is there further comment, debate, anything for the good of the order?

Senator Coons: One last comment, if I might. My colleague is demurring. Senator Shaheen has been a terrific partner on this committee to all of us. Speaking for myself, she has been a delight to travel with, clear-eyed, engaged, honest, firm, thoughtful. Her service as governor, her grounding in her home State, and her commitment to our Nation have been unparalleled in the folks with whom I have been blessed with serving. And I was surprised at her announcement today but look forward to spending our remaining two years of time serving on this committee together, working with you, Mr. Chairman, and with our colleagues to do the very best we can for our Nation.

The Chairman: Thank you. I will concur in those remarks regarding Senator Shaheen. Certainly she has been a delight to work with, and she and I have had prior experience as Chair and Ranking Member of the Small Business Committee. So this was not any new undertaking for us, but both of us were looking forward to the time when we would have the Committee because it is -- I think it is working better than what it has had in the past.

Senator Coons: Yes, it has.

The Chairman: Someone would say not a very high bar, but nonetheless, we are where we are, and God bless her. We will all wish her well in her -- in her endeavors, but there are still two years ahead of us, so. Anything further for the good of the order?

[No response.]

The Chairman: If not, the Committee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:20 a.m., the Committee was adjourned.]