

wrote him a letter and received a response, which I will read:

November 19, 2013.

Dear Senator MCCAIN,

I regret that in my current posture as a nominee and private citizen, I am not now in a position to commit to provide the information you seek from the Department of Homeland Security.

At this point, I must respectfully refer you to the Department's current leadership. I know this was a matter of discussion between you and Secretary Napolitano, and I understand your frustration. As I believe I have demonstrated to you and others on the Senate and House Armed Services Committee—

Why he said Senate Armed Services Committee, I am not sure.

—I have a strong respect for Congress' oversight role. If I am confirmed, and if your request is still outstanding at that point, I promise that addressing your letter will be a top and immediate priority for me.

This is the November 19, 2013, letter from Mr. Jeh Charles Johnson.

In other words, the nominee for the Department of Homeland Security, who has direct responsibility for securing our borders, direct responsibility as outlined in legislation passed by this body, the comprehensive immigration reform bill, refuses to give me and this body the information. I hope there are other Senators who might be interested in what is necessary to achieve 90 percent effective control of our borders. He refuses to give me that information.

Thanks to the good offices of my beloved friend CARL LEVIN and my dear friend Senator CARPER, I just came from a meeting in my office with Mr. Jeh Johnson. Mr. Jeh Johnson again repeated to me that he could not give me the information of what is necessary, what tools are necessary to ensure 90 percent effective control of our border.

Allegedly, he is being prevented from doing that by the White House. It is stunning. Why would the White House prevent the nominee for Secretary of Homeland Security from providing this to Members of the Senate and members of the committee that has oversight of homeland security, which is fundamental information if we are going to achieve effective control of our border?

I go home to Arizona and I say: Yes, it is in the law, my friends. It is in the law that we are going to have to get 90 percent effective control of our border, but I don't know how we do it because the agency that will be required to do it will not give me the necessary information to do it.

My friends, we will voting on Monday to confirm Mr. Johnson. He will be confirmed. There is no doubt about it now that we have majority vote. We have now deprived Republicans of their advice and consent responsibilities and authority. We have not only changed the rules of the Senate, we have abridged the Constitution of the United States because the only way that I could have received this information from Mr. Johnson was if I had said: I

can't approve of your nomination until you provide the information which, by any objective observer, I am entitled to—not only entitled to; it is my responsibility to know that. It is my responsibility. That is why we have a committee. That is why we have a committee, the homeland security committee, that has oversight of the functions of the executive branch. That is how equal branches of government are supposed to function.

Mr. Johnson will be confirmed, and the message will go out, believe me: You don't have to answer a question by a Republican Senator. You don't have to respond to a straightforward question.

There was nothing devious about the question I asked Mr. Johnson. There was nothing complicated. They certainly should have the information of what steps and measures are necessary to ensure 90 percent effective control of our border—which is a requirement in the law, if it is ever passed. Certainly the requirement was passed by the Senate.

It is kind of a sad day. It was a sad day for me when we changed the rules. It was a sad day for me to see people who have been here a very short period of time basically shatter the comity which exists and which is vital to doing business in the Senate.

I also would point out to my colleagues—particularly those who are new and who drove this change in the Senate rules—what goes around comes around and what goes around will come around. To their deep regret, some day—I say to the President and I say to my colleagues who voted for it on a party-line vote, for the first time in history changing the rules of the Senate from 67 votes to 51 votes—they will regret it.

The people who will suffer greatly from this are the American people because this place is largely dysfunctional anyway. If we think it was dysfunctional before, wait and see. I say that with deep regret because I value and treasure my relationships with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. Some of the best friends I have are on the other side of the aisle. But to expect to do business as usual when I can't even get a straight answer for a question that—now by not having the answer inhibits and in many ways prohibits my ability to respond and carry out my responsibilities to the citizens of my State—cannot go without being responded to.

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. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. I now yield back all time on the Patterson nomination.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I was unable to attend the rollcall vote on the nomination of Heather Anne Higginbottom to be Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources and the rollcall vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Anne W. Patterson to be an Assistant Secretary of State. Had I been present for these two votes, I would have voted "aye."

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to 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.

TRIBUTE TO GREG JONES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I come to the floor today to recognize the retirement of an upstanding citizen from the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and to pay tribute to his career of service to my home State. This month, Greg Jones concludes over 21 years as executive director of the non-profit Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation, SKED. His daily presence at the helm of the organization will be sorely missed, but his legacy will endure in the thousands of jobs he helped create and the increased economic vigor he helped bring to the region.

When he first took the job at the behest of Congressman HAL ROGERS in 1992, Greg oversaw a two-person staff and commanded a \$75,000 budget. Under his leadership the organization has grown to its current staff of 10 professionals and a budget of nearly \$2 million. Throughout his tenure as executive director, Greg marshaled SKED's resources to help start and expand businesses, provide training for entrepreneurs, and attract new industries to the corporation's 45-county service area. Under Greg's watch, SKED has unquestionably lived up to its stated mission—"to foster economic growth and vitality in the region."

I ask my Senate colleagues to join me in recognizing Greg's exemplary career as well as wishing him a happy retirement with his wife Belinda and son Christopher.

An article about Greg Jones's retirement from SKED recently appeared in an area newspaper, the Commonwealth Journal. I ask unanimous consent that the full article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objections, the article was ordered to be printed as follows:

SKED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREG JONES
RETIRING IN DECEMBER

[From the Commonwealth Journal,
Oct. 13, 2013]

SOMERSET, KY.—Greg Jones, executive director of Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation (SKED), will retire in

December after more than 21 years of service to the nonprofit organization and to Southeast Kentucky.

The longest serving executive director in the organization's 27-year history, Jones is credited with strengthening SKED's mission of job creation and making it the premier economic development agency in the region. Beginning with a \$75,000 budget and two-person staff in 1992, Jones and his current staff of 10 professionals now operate with an annual budget of nearly \$2 million.

"I've had the privilege to lead SKED and our amazing team of professionals for over two decades, and I am extremely proud of our successes," Jones said. "I shall forever be grateful to Congressman Hal Rogers and the incredibly supportive and talented individuals on the SKED Board of Directors for giving me the opportunity to be a part of this remarkable organization. And, finally, I wish to thank the dedicated staff of SKED for their loyalty and friendship over these many years."

It was Congressman Rogers who asked Jones to head up the grassroots effort he began, in 1986, back in 1992. At the time, Jones was working as executive director of the Somerset-Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce.

"Over the last two decades, Greg Jones has worked tirelessly to recruit thousands of jobs and expand the industrial portfolio of southern and eastern Kentucky," said Rogers. "Greg's foresight to address vital infrastructure upgrades, recruit high-tech companies and support entrepreneurial growth will continue to benefit economic development in our region for years to come. While he is moving on from daily operations at SKED, I have asked Greg to remain in close contact to offer guidance for the organization that he has helped mold for success. My wife Cynthia and I wish Greg and his family many blessings in his years of retirement."

As SKED executive director, Jones has been responsible for the marketing and industrial recruitment activities for the 45-county SKED service area, managing a \$10-million loan portfolio and providing economic and community development assistance to local communities in Southeast Kentucky.

Under his leadership, SKED has successfully assisted more than 100 businesses and industries in starting or expanding their operations in the region. These companies now employ more than 7,700 workers and have invested an estimated \$500 million in Southeast Kentucky. He has successfully prepared loan and grant applications totaling more than \$26 million to support the organization's job creation activities.

Building partnerships has been Jones's mantra for the past 21 years. Whether it was with local community leaders or state and national funding agencies, Jones worked tirelessly to form strong alliances across the region, state and nation. One of those key partnerships is with the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC).

Earl Gohl, ARC federal co-chair, has worked with Jones on several key projects in recent years.

"Greg's leadership has made SKED what it is today," Gohl said. "What he has accomplished with the SKED entrepreneurship program and the Valley Oak Technology Complex has laid the groundwork for what Eastern Kentucky can be tomorrow."

Jones led SKED to receive designation as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) in 1999. As a result, the organization received funding to implement several innovative regional projects including the Valley Oak Technology Complex, the Somerset Rail Park, the Southern Kentucky Information Technology Center and the Enterprise Center.

SKED received the National Association of Development Organization's (NADO) 2002 Innovation Award in recognition of its technology initiatives.

In 2009, SKED became a Certified Development Corporation (CDC) by the U.S. Small Business Administration. This designation authorized SKED to process SBA 504 loans throughout the state of Kentucky. The 504 Loan Program is the SBA's economic development tool to provide small-business financing and create jobs all across America.

To date, some 250 people have received entrepreneurial training from SKED thanks to a grant from the ARC in 2011. SKED established the Entrepreneurial SMARTs program designed to offer nationally acclaimed entrepreneurship classes at a reduced rate. A CDFI grant provided the funding to hire a professional to teach the classes.

SKED is governed by a 12-member, volunteer board of directors. Over the past 21 years, Jones has worked with a number of successful men and women on the board, each with different areas of expertise and from a variety of career fields, but all leaders in their own communities. As board members, they share SKED's mission of job creation in Southeast Kentucky.

SKED President Tim Barnes is one of those community leaders. President and CEO of Hometown Bank, he's led the SKED Board of Directors for the past three years.

"Greg has been the face of SKED for so long, it's hard to imagine ever being able to replace him," Barnes said. "Let's just say there will be no replacing Greg. He's one of a kind. His legacy of caring professionalism will live on through the lending programs and other initiatives he's worked so tirelessly to develop over the past two decades. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors, and speaking on behalf of all board members past and present, I say a hearty thank you."

The SKED Board of Directors plans a national search for Jones's successor.

A native of Laurel County, Jones has served on numerous boards and commissions both locally and nationally. These positions include being past president of the Appalachia Development Alliance. He is currently on the board of directors for both TOURSEKY and the National Institute for Hometown Security. He was named East Kentucky Power Community/Economic Development Professional of the Year in 2007.

He earned his B.S. in industrial technology at Morehead State University in Morehead, Ky. He also holds a master of public administration degree from Southern Illinois University—Edwardsville. He also attended the Institute for Organization Management and Economic Development Institute.

In 1995, he received the Certified Economic Developer designation from the American Economic Development Council.

He is married to Belinda Taylor Jones and they have a son, Christopher.

REMEMBERING THE NEWTOWN TRAGEDY

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, this Saturday will mark 1 year since one of the most horrific tragedies in our nation's history: the murder of 26 innocents at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT on December 14, 2012. All of us remember the shock we felt when we heard the news reports. Twenty first graders—only 6 or 7 years old—were gunned down in their classrooms, and six educators were killed while trying to protect their students from harm.

The events of that day were heart-breaking. As we come upon the grim 1-year anniversary of that event, our thoughts and our prayers are with the families and friends of the victims. Many of them stood in a nearby firehouse on that day waiting for first responders to bring them any word about their loved ones in the school. One by one, the first responders brought down children and teachers to the firehouse to reunite them with their families—until the families of the victims were the only ones left. Then it became clear that no more would be coming.

These families have suffered immensely. But in the face of their grief and loss, they have shown incredible strength and courage. They have supported one another with a strong sense of community and faith, and they have dedicated themselves to the cause of sparing other families what they have gone through.

I have met with many of these families over the past year. They have come to meet with Members of Congress, and with lawmakers in many States, to share their ideas for how to reduce the devastating toll of gun violence. I salute them for their courage, and I thank them for standing up on behalf of so many families across America who have lost a loved one to gunfire.

Over 11,000 Americans are murdered with guns each year. If we count suicides and accidental shootings, the death toll from guns rises to more than 31,000 Americans each year. This epidemic of gun violence is unacceptable. We cannot simply shrug our shoulders and write off these shootings as the cost of living in America.

In my home State of Illinois, I have met too many grieving mothers who have lost their children to senseless gun violence—mothers such as: Annette Nance-Holt, who lost her son Blair in the crossfire of a gang shooting; Mary Kay Mace, whose daughter Ryanne was killed in her classroom at Northern Illinois University; Pam Bosley, whose son Terrell was shot and killed outside of church; and Cleo Pendleton, whose daughter Hadiya was gunned down at a bus stop where she was seeking shelter from the rain.

I do not want to go to another funeral for a police officer like Chicago Police Officer Thomas Wortham IV, who was killed by gang members with a straw-purchased gun. I do not want to hear about any more killers who couldn't pass a background check but still were able to buy guns through a private sale—such as the man who murdered Ricky Byrdson, the former Northwestern University basketball coach, in Skokie, IL.

We need to take proactive steps, consistent with the Constitution and the Second Amendment, to stop these situations from happening. We need to reduce this high number of violent shootings. We can do this by working for better gun safety laws that will spare other families what these families have gone through. No matter how