

military experience, has a significant background of being the CEO of Procter & Gamble, and in that position he was well-known for his value-based leadership, believing that “the best companies and leaders operate with a clear purpose and consistent set of principles or values.”

What the VA must do right now is to dismantle the bureaucracy, break down the culture of indifference, and review its commitment to the core values of the Department. There is no higher calling than to take care of the men and women who served our country.

Mr. McDonald shares that dedication to making certain our veterans have access to quality care—the best our Nation can offer—and he is focused and ready to take on the challenges that lie ahead. At least he convinced me that is the case.

There is now, fortunately, compromise legislation poised to pass both the House and Senate this week that will soon offer veterans more access to the quality care they deserve. Although this legislation is significant, it is impossible for Congress to mandate a change in attitude. Leaders can change attitudes at the Department. Congress does not have the power to control or develop a workforce that treats veterans like patriots, deserving care from a grateful nation, rather than to make them feel as though they are a burden.

Leadership throughout the institution, starting with Bob McDonald at the top, must command the VA to head down a new path of redemption and hope. We must create an agency that is more cost-effective, more compassionate, and more caring toward the veterans it serves. The VA must become an agency that is worthy of the service and sacrifice of our Nation's veterans.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:35 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

NOMINATION OF ROBERT ALAN McDONALD TO BE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 2:45 p.m. will be equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, before I begin I do want to take a moment to commend the chairmen of the Veterans' Affairs Committees in both the House and the Senate for their commitment to reaching a deal that puts our veterans first and gives the VA the tools they need to address immediate challenges.

More importantly, I really applaud their work to build and strengthen the VA system in order to continue to deliver the best care for our Nation's heroes over the long term.

The deal they announced yesterday is a very important step toward addressing a lot of issues that we know exist within the VA system, but it cannot be the final step. As transparency and accountability increase at the VA, so will the investigations and reports of additional concerns, requiring even more action from the VA, from the administration, and from this Congress.

However, as Chairman MILLER said yesterday, we cannot legislate good character here in Congress. It is going to be up to the leadership at the Department of Veterans Affairs to truly enact those reforms.

So I have come to the floor today in support of the nomination of Robert McDonald, someone I believe has the skills necessary to make these necessary changes as the next VA Secretary.

As I told Mr. McDonald last week, he is faced with a truly monumental task. Even as we pass comprehensive legislation to bring significant reforms at the VA to reduce wait times, to improve accountability, there are still many serious challenges the VA must address.

Twenty-two veterans still take their own lives each day. Thousands of veterans are alone, coping with sexual assaults. And while the Department has made commendable progress, it will be an uphill battle as we work to eliminate veterans homelessness and the claims backlog. Mr. McDonald will have to grapple with these and many more issues—all on day one.

When I met with Mr. McDonald in my office a few weeks ago, he told me he was one of the veterans who was lost in the system during his transition from military life to civilian life. So I trust—I trust—he understands what a critical moment this is for the VA and why we must finally fix many of these systemic and cultural challenges.

We have all made a promise to those who have signed up to serve. So I encourage my colleagues to support this nomination. I am hopeful the steps we are taking here this week on behalf of our Nation's heroes will finally ignite the much-delayed reforms our veterans have been demanding and they deserve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I stand today not to rehash with my colleagues the crisis that exists at the Veterans' Administration or to share it with the American people. They know the story, and especially our Nation's veterans, who have been given the runaround.

I am here to highlight a success in the Senate. See, my colleagues, on July 7, 2014—not even a month ago—we received the nomination for the new VA Secretary from the President.

On July 22 of this month, we had a confirmation hearing on that nomina-

tion. On July 23—the next day—Robert McDonald was passed unanimously out of the committee. Today—before the end of July—we are on the Senate floor to confirm Robert McDonald as the next VA Secretary.

I rise to urge my colleagues to support this nomination. The VA needs a confirmed Secretary in place to begin a long, arduous process of reform and cultural change.

By now, our colleagues probably know that Bob McDonald is a veteran himself. He is a graduate of West Point. He served 5 years in active duty, and served most of that time at Fort Bragg, NC. So I consider him one of ours.

He spent more than 30 years working for Procter & Gamble—I think the most competitive manufacturing company in the world. His work led him across the globe. But he also had prominent roles at a number of other organizations—Xerox, United States Steel Corporation, and the Business Roundtable.

Mr. McDonald has frequently lectured to groups on leadership skills, and his leadership philosophy was highlighted in the book “The Leader's Compass.” He is the type of leader we need at the VA at this very crucial time.

Bob McDonald clearly has the experience to run an organization as large and as diverse as the Department of Veterans Affairs. Perhaps more importantly, he has selflessly agreed to take the challenge of leading the VA at its most critical time—something many people might have passed on.

I hope this week, in addition to this nomination, we will pass legislation to help the VA and its next leader address the systemic problems with access to VA health care and a corrosive culture that led to this crisis. But that legislation would be just one step. An enormous amount of work must be done from within the VA to rebuild its reputation and to turn it into an agency that will live up to the expectations of our veterans and a nation grateful to them for their service. We need a strong leader to do that, and I am glad Robert McDonald has agreed to serve his country once again in this important role.

The nomination received the unanimous support of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I urge my colleagues: Confirm Robert McDonald as the next Secretary of the VA, and let's get on with the important work of reform at that agency.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Madam President, my colleague from North Carolina has just spoken on behalf of the nomination of Robert McDonald to be the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and I will do likewise. He has also spoken of his background as a graduate of West Point, as an Army officer, and as the CEO of one of the largest companies in the world.