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BUSINESS MEETING TO CONSIDER S. 3239, WILLIAM T. COLEMAN, JR.,
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION HEADQUARTERS ACT AND 18 GENERAL SERVICES
ADMINISTRATION RESOLUTIONS

Tuesday, February 11, 2020

United States Senate

Committee on Environment and Public Works

Washington, D.C.

The committee, met, pursuant to notice, at 9:47 a.m. in room 406, Dirksen Senate Office Building, the Honorable John Barrasso [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Senators Barrasso, Carper, Capito, Cramer, Braun, Rounds, Sullivan, Wicker, Ernst, Cardin, Merkley, Gillibrand, Van Hollen.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOHN BARRASSO, A UNITED STATES SENATOR
FROM THE STATE OF WYOMING

Senator Barrasso. Good morning. I call this business meeting to order.

Today, we are going to consider one bill and eighteen General Services Administration Resolutions. Senator Carper and I have agreed that we will begin voting at 9:55. At that time, I will call up the items on the agenda. We are not going to debate the items on the agenda while we are voting. Instead, we are going to debate them before we begin voting.

I will also be happy to recognize any member who still wishes to speak after the voting concludes.

Today, we are going to consider S. 3239, the William T. Coleman Jr. Department of Transportation Headquarters Act. Senator Wicker introduced S. 3239 at the end of January. I joined the bill as an original cosponsor, and so did Ranking Member Carper and Senators Booker, Cantwell, Casey, Harris, Toomey, Scott, and Inhofe. I want to thank Senator Wicker for his work on this bipartisan piece of legislation.

William T. Coleman devoted his life to public service. He was the first African American Secretary of Transportation, and only the second African American to hold a cabinet level position. The bill commemorates his legacy by designating the United States Department of Transportation's headquarters as the William T. Coleman Jr.

Federal Building.

A Republican, Coleman was an advisor to every President, Republican and Democrat, from Dwight David Eisenhower through George W. Bush. His service included appointments to several presidential commissions.

As an esteemed civil rights attorney, Coleman was a lead strategist and co-author of the legal brief filed for the Supreme Court seminal case on racial inequality, *Brown v. the Board of Education*. His participation in this landmark case came just a few years after he broke new ground as the first African American to clerk for a U.S. Supreme Court Justice.

At Harvard Law School, Coleman was the third African American to serve on the Board of Editors of the Harvard Law Review. He graduated in 1946, ranked first in his class.

Coleman broke down racial barriers for others who came after him. In 1995, Coleman was awarded the Nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, for his contributions to the legal profession and to society.

William T. Coleman Jr. passed away in March of 2017. It is an honor to join my fellow senators to celebrate the life of such a distinguished American, and I encourage every senator to support this legislation.

Today, we are also going to consider 18 resolutions to approve prospectuses providing for General Services Administration's leases. These prospectuses will allow agencies including the Federal Bureau

of Investigation to consolidate space, resulting in increased efficiency and saving taxpayer money. The Federal Government stands to save roughly \$3.5 million each year if all of the prospectuses are approved.

In a few seconds, I will turn to Senator Carper for his opening statement, and if any other member has anything that they would like to offer at this time, I would be happy to recognize them.

As we are waiting for Senator Carper, who has been unavoidably detained, I would like to call on Senator Wicker at this time, as the piece of legislation that we are voting on today is one with you as the original sponsor, and a number of us as original cosponsors. Senator Wicker, at your convenience.

[The prepared statement of Senator Barrasso follows:]

Senator Wicker. Well, thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and fellow members, Republican and Democrat. I do appreciate the support, the co-sponsorship of this important step that the committee will take today. To honor a man of heroic achievement and inspiration, a pioneer, and what better month to do it than February, Black History Month.

William T. Coleman Jr. was an accomplished legal scholar, World War II veteran, and civil rights leader who had already left his mark on history, and then he became a cabinet secretary. He was the first African American to clerk for the United States Supreme Court. As a young attorney, he worked on five cases for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, cases that lead directly to the court's landmark ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

He was also co-council in the *McLaughlin v. Florida* case that led to the end of state bans on interracial marriage. How far we have come since then. Our honoree would later serve on president commissions during the Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon Administrations. In 1975, he was tapped by President Gerald Ford to be the Nation's fourth Secretary of Transportation, the first African American to hold such a position, and only the second African American to hold any cabinet level position.

Secretary Coleman provided a forward-looking vision for the future of transportation, spearheading the first comprehensive national study on transportation policy, and several important reform

efforts. The William T. Coleman Jr. Department of Transportation Headquarters Act would name the Department of Transportation's headquarters after this groundbreaking leader.

I want to thank my colleagues, Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Carper, and Senators Cantwell, Tim Scott, Harris, Toomey, Casey, Booker, and Inhofe, for cosponsoring this important legislation, and I am sure others will want to cosponsor it also, but we just needed to go ahead and bring the bill up at this point.

So, Mr. Chairman and my fellow Senators, I think we will all agree this is a fitting tribute, will be a fitting tribute, a lasting tribute to a distinguished public servant which will honor his legacy for generations to come.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Barrasso. Well, thank you very much, Senator Wicker. We appreciate your leadership on this and are looking forward to getting this out of committee today.

Would anyone else like to make any comments or statements prior to the vote? Because we do have enough members who have arrived, and Senator Carper has agreed to hold his opening statement until after the vote. Because we know a number of people have conflicts starting in a few moments. So now that enough members have arrived, I would like to move to vote on the item on today's agenda.

The Ranking Member and I have agreed to vote on S. 3239, the William T. Coleman Jr. Department of Transportation Headquarters Act, and the 18 General Services Administration Resolutions, en bloc, by

voice. Members may choose to have their votes recorded for a specific item in that block after the voice vote.

I would now like to call up S. 3239, the William T. Coleman Jr. Department of Transportation Headquarters Act and 18 General Services Administration Resolutions en bloc.

[The text of S. 3239 follows:]

Senator Barrasso. I move to approve and report S. 3239 and approve 18 GSA Resolutions en bloc. Is there a second?

Senator Carper. Second.

Senator Barrasso. All those in favor, say aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Senator Barrasso. Opposed, say nay.

[No audible response.]

Senator Barrasso. In the opinion of the chair, as the eyes have it, we have approved S. 3239, which will be reported favorably to the Senate. We have also approved 18 GSA Resolutions.

The voting part of the business meeting is finished. I would be happy to recognize any member, but want to start with Senator Carper. So any other members may make a statement on the legislation or resolutions that we have just approved.

Senator Carper.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE THOMAS R. CARPER, A UNITED STATES SENATOR
FROM THE STATE OF DELAWARE

Senator Carper. Senator Cardin said, don't take this personally, I don't.

[Laughter.]

Senator Carper. Good morning, everybody, and thanks Mr. Chairman, and thanks to our staff for the work you have done, that has been done on the agenda today, two agenda items today. As our Chairman has already noted, even before I got here, we have considered legislation to designate the U.S. Department of Transportation headquarters building as the William T. Coleman Jr. Federal Building.

I believe the naming of that headquarters after Mr. Coleman is a fitting tribute as we celebrate African American History Month again this year. Mr. Coleman was the fourth Secretary of Transportation and the second African American to hold a cabinet-level post in our Nation's history. Think about that.

Mr. Coleman wrote in his autobiography these words, passionate words, he said "We cannot simply build highways willy-nilly. We need coordinated regional transportation plans that preserve the quality of urban life, conserve energy, and reduce air pollution, including that from the new threat of greenhouse gas emissions."

That was like, decades ago. Talk about somebody who was ahead of his time.

Mr. Coleman's words have even greater meaning today as we

confront this global climate crisis. I asked my staff, I said find a quote from William Coleman that I might slip into my remarks, and that one really nails it. But to dedicate the Department of Transportation headquarters when the Federal Government takes possession of the building next month, is an honor befitting Mr. Coleman's lifetime of service.

I am happy to be an original cosponsor of the legislation along with you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased that we are moving this legislation today.

Today, we are also taking up 18 General Services Administration Prospectuses Resolutions which will release most of the backlog that has built up here at our committee. I would be remiss if I did not mention that many concerns still remain from the Old Post Office Lease, to recent news by USDA and the Bureau of Land Management to what needs to be done for and with the FBI headquarters building.

Regarding the FBI, for example, we still have, I didn't believe this at first, I double-checked with my staff, but I am told we still have questions for the record that have gone unanswered. These questions for the record are from an oversight hearing this committee held almost two years ago.

Let me just say that again. We have not received answers from GSA to questions from members of this committee from a hearing almost two years ago. In that same hearing, GSA indicated that they would be sending up prospectuses regarding the FBI headquarters. Two years later, we are still waiting.

Let me say that again, too. At that same hearing, GSA indicated that they would be sending up a prospectus regarding the FBI headquarters. Two years later, we are still waiting for that, too.

We know the Hoover Building in downtown Washington, D.C. is unsafe, but action remains unseen.

I hope we can continue to work together to press for answers with you, Mr. Chairman, and with all of our colleagues on this committee.

With that, I look forward to again concluding this meeting this morning. I want to thank you, Senator Barrasso, I want to thank you as our chairman, along with our colleagues and members of their staff for all the work that has been done to make this meeting both swift and productive. Thanks.

[The prepared statement of Senator Carper follows:]

Senator Barrasso. Well, thank you very much, Senator Carper, for your ongoing leadership on these very important issues. I do ask unanimous consent that the staff have authority to make technical and conforming changes to each of the matters that have been approved today.

With that, our business meeting is concluded and we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:00 a.m., the business meeting was concluded.]