think the President was correct in not only saying that we were going to withhold any diplomats being sent over to China during the next round of the Olympic Games, but I understand the administration is reaching out to other countries to join us.

Whether it is the Uighers or whether it is Ms. Peng Shuai, outrageous human rights abuses should not be ignored. And as I glance at your resolution here, it looks like you hit the nail on the head.

So why am I reserving the right to object?

Here is something that I think would be helpful in the cause of human rights. What if the United States of America actually had an Ambassador in China?

Think about that possibility. We would have someone representing our country on the scene in Beijing working for the United States, speaking up for human rights.

Well, what is holding us back? Why won't Biden nominate somebody for this job?

Well, it turns out he did, a man named Nicholas Burns.

Well, we all know him. He has a long record of diplomacy in Foreign Service—service in Russia and other places. He is a key man in the State Department and one that we can rely on. And he should be in Beijing fighting for the causes that you and I agree on today.

What can possibly be holding him up? We need him there.

Well, it turns out he is being held up by that side of the aisle objecting to his being called.

Well, we have a chance to resolve that today. We can pass not only your resolution, but we can appoint Mr. Burns as the Ambassador to China and get it done and he could be on a plane in the morning.

How about that? That would be an amazing thing to accomplish. You take that home to Florida, and I will take that home to Illinois. It is a good day's work.

And so, to reach that end, I ask that the pending request be modified as follows: Notwithstanding rule XXII, the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nomination: Calendar No. 525, R. Nicholas Burns, of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador of the United States of America to People's Republic of China; that the nomination be confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; and then, as if in legislative session, the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of your resolution, S. Res. 474, submitted earlier today; that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table without intervening action or debate.

What an amazing bipartisan achievement that we can put together in just a few minutes here.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator from Florida so modify his request?

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Reserving the right to object, first, I thank my colleague for agreeing that—I think we all agree that what has happened to Peng Shuai is wrong, and I think we all know we have to stand up to what communist China is doing.

Here is my concern about Nick Burns: Until the day he was nominated by President Biden, he had had no problems with communist China. He has never stood up to communist China; he has taken money from communist China; he has always looked the other way.

So my concern is that we ought to have a vote on him because everybody ought to have the opportunity to talk to him and get his position. I have talked to him, and he has never ever said a word about the Uighurs, about the Tibetans, about what happened in Hong Kong, about stealing American technology. He has never done any of those things. So I don't know how it is going to help us.

I object to the modification, but I hope my colleague will agree that the resolution itself is worth it to go forward and just do it by themselves, and, over time, we will have a vote on Nick Burns.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard to the modification.

Is there an objection to the original request?

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, time is wasting. We need an Ambassador to China.

I am sorry, but I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, this is pretty disappointing, all right?

My Democratic colleague said that he agreed with the resolution. I think it is time that we stand up for the Chinese citizens who are being oppressed by Secretary Xi.

What this resolution does is say that, you know, we have got to stand up to all the oppression in China, that we have got to stand up for Peng Shuai. The resolution says, you know, as for the athletes who are going over there, we have your backs. Yet, if you look at what is happening now, the Democrats are saying: We are not going to do those things.

I don't think that is right. I don't believe our platform in the Senate should be that we don't stand for alleged victims of sexual assault. I think, by not having this resolution approved today and having the Democrats block it, that that is exactly what we are saying.

So it is pretty disappointing. This was a basic resolution that said that we were going to stand up for Peng Shuai. I am very appreciative of what the WTA has done. I am very disappointed with what the NBA has done. I am disappointed with what the IOC has done.

I am also disappointed that the Senate, today, could not come to a resolution and simply stand up for somebody who has accused the Vice Premier of China of sexual assault. None of us would like that to happen to anybody in our families, and we don't want it to happen to anybody in this country. We ought to stand up for people in China just like we would want them to stand up for people in this country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I am here on the floor today to urge the Senate to move immediately to vote on the confirmation of Dr. Laurie Locascio to be the Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology at the Department of Commerce and—this is a double-headed position—as the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

As of today, we have 156 pending nominations on the executive calendar. These include Ambassadorial nominations to important countries like China, Japan, and others all around the world. It is harming our national security. We should be moving forward with them urgently. Then there are a whole number of nominations that relate to very important U.S. domestic Agencies, and one of them is this appointment at the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

Look, many Americans are aware of the NIH, the National Institutes of Health. They know that that Institute does very important medical research that helps save lives and that it develops treatments to help Americans and others around the world. In fact, they have played a key role in the development of the vaccines against COVID–19.

Less well-known but also very important is the National Institute of Standards and Technology, which plays a key role in supporting American economic competitiveness and supporting innovation for Americans and American companies around the world. They also play an important role in the supply chain effort of the United States. That, of course, has taken on added significance in recent months as we experience bottlenecks.

So we are only hurting ourselves, and we are only hurting our country by refusing to allow this body to move forward on a vote on her nomination. We are essentially saying to this very important institute, this important government entity: We are not going to vote on your leader. So it is time to move forward on this.

Now, I want to talk a little bit about why Dr. Locascio is an exceptional choice for this role. It is not only because she hails from the great State of Maryland; it is not only because she is a graduate of the University of Maryland, Baltimore and that she has been

a leader of the University of Maryland's research endeavors since 2017; but it is also—and most importantly—because she brings to this position three decades of experience in working at all levels at NIST, the institute to which she has been nominated to lead.

She began her time at the Agency as a research staffer and rose to become the Acting Principal Deputy Director and Associate Director for Laboratory Programs. She was responsible for directing the Material Measurement Laboratory, which is one of NIST's largest laboratories. She also has very intimate knowledge of NIST from her other years of experience there, and she has really touched upon every area of endeavor within the NIST portfolio.

As I indicated, this appointment would be important at any time, but it is especially important at this moment as we grapple with supply chain issues and as we try to bolster U.S. manufacturing and try to make sure that we manufacture here, in the United States, essential products that we need.

This body, in addition to focusing on the manufacturing side of the ledger, also understands the importance of investment in vital research and materials science, in things like quantum computing and artificial intelligence. We passed, with an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 68 to 32, the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act, and NIST has very important responsibilities in those areas. What NIST does there is very important in our maintaining and sharpening our position in the world, especially as we address the growing challenge of China.

I also want to mention the Manufacturing Extension Partnership that is run out of NIST, which plays a very important role right now as we work to fight these supply chain blockages and also accelerate the production of personal protective equipment—N95 masks and ventilators. That push was fueled, largely, by the $50 million that this body helped to appropriate for the MEP program in the CARES Act. Again, that is a program housed in NIST that is helping to deal with supply chain bottlenecks when it comes to essential protections from the pandemic.

So there is no justification for blocking this nomination. In fact, all we are doing is tying our hands behind our backs by depriving this important institute of their top leader at a time when we face national challenges on supply chain issues and at a time when we understand we have got to be at the top of our game when it comes to innovation and cutting-edge technologies in so many areas where it is essential to meet the challenge of China and others around the world in global competition. So I would really urge my colleagues to allow this nomination to proceed. It is the right thing to do for our country.

Mr. President, at this point in time, I ask unanimous consent that, notwithstanding rule XXII, the Senate consider the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 551, Department of Commerce, Laurie E. Locascio, of Maryland, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology; that the nomination be confirmed; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order on the nomination; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

First, I want to acknowledge my colleague's interest in the nominee for the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

I am not sure if my colleague is aware, but, last month, I sent a letter to the Commerce Committee, informing them that I would be holding all Department of Transportation and Department of Commerce nominees until the committee hears testimony from Secretary Raimondo and Secretary Buttigieg about the supply chain crisis.

Right now, there are nearly 100 ships waiting to dock in California ports to unload their goods, but they are unable to do so because of President Biden's supply chain crisis. Christmas is just a couple of weeks away, and families and businesses are facing empty shelves, shortages on goods, and higher prices. So far, as far as I can tell, I have only seen Secretary Buttigieg and Secretary Raimondo play TV commentator rather than actually go out to California and solve the problems.

It is long past time for the Biden administration to tell us exactly what they are doing to solve this crisis and help American families. Until we hear from Secretary Buttigieg and Secretary Raimondo in the Commerce Committee, I will be objecting to all Commerce and Transportation nominees going through an expedited process here in the Senate.

This isn't personal. It is about accountability. I look forward to hearing from Secretary Raimondo and Secretary Buttigieg and then going forward with these nominees.

Therefore, Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I would just ask my colleague, in the coming days, before the end of the year, to reconsider his position.

He is a member of the Commerce Committee, and he knows well that there have been three hearings on supply chain issues, one on May 11 regarding ''Freight Mobility: Strengthening America's Supply''; on July 15, ''Implementing Supply Chain Resiliency''; and on December 7, ''Unchartered Waters: Challenges Posed by Ocean Shipping Supply Chains,'' where the committee discussed a whole range of supply chain issues.

Moreover, responding to these issues, if we are really serious about addressing our supply chain issues, how does it help to deny us the opportunity to vote and put in place the Director of an Agency that is supposed to help relieve the supply chain bottlenecks?

I know the Senator from Florida had to leave, but it is a very simple question. If there is a genuine interest in addressing supply chain bottlenecks and addressing the cost pressures, how does denying NIST a leader help advance that agenda? Clearly, it does not. Clearly, this is harming the U.S. markets at this important time. Clearly, it is harming our supply chain efforts. Clearly, it is harming U.S. competitiveness.

So I urge my colleagues to move forward on this nomination. Apparently not today because of the objection, but let's get it done before the end of this year.

I am not going to ask for a quorum call. Thank you. That is it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

VACCINE MANDATE

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I come to the floor of the Senate today to make a few points and ask a few questions.

First of all, can we all acknowledge that there is so much that we do not know about the coronavirus, about COVID, the disease, or about the COVID vaccines? Our response to COVID, as a result, has been a reaction to very imperfect information.

So, very early in the pandemic, I gave those individuals in a position to have to make very tough decisions with imperfect information a great deal of latitude in making those tough calls, but over the course of the months, we have learned a lot.

We have always been told to follow the science, but it sure seems our healthcare Agencies—as I refer to them, the COVID gods; the Dr. Faucis of the world, the Agency heads, the Biden administration, the mainstream media, and social media—have never allowed second opinions. There has been one narrative, and they simply have not been willing to consider alternative measures.

So a question I think we should all be asking ourselves is, Does that response work? Over 780,000 Americans have lost their lives. The human toll of the economic devastation of the shutdowns, the year of lost learning for our children, the psychological harm to our children, the record overdose deaths, the increase in suicides—I don't know how you can take a look at America's death rate—the last time I looked, it was a couple weeks old; about 220 per 100,000 population. By the way, Sweden was at 145 per 100,000 a couple of weeks ago. I don't see how anybody can take a look at the response imposed in our country by the COVID gods and say it was a success.

So acknowledging the fact that there is still so much we don't know, I would