

Politics



"Here's the warning the GOP needs to hear. The vast majority of Republican voters, volunteers, and donors are no longer loyal to the GOP, Republican Party, and candidates just because they have an R by their name. Their loyalty now lies with Donald J Trump. And that started more than 4 years ago when the people chose an outsider over 16 other Republicans. Trump's America First agenda are the policy's the base wants. And they will not support Republicans who won't fight for them and America First."

— Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, Georgia Republican, on Twitter

SENATE

Three senators sworn in shifting balance of chamber

Democrats take control of Senate for first time in decade

By **STEPHEN DINAN**
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

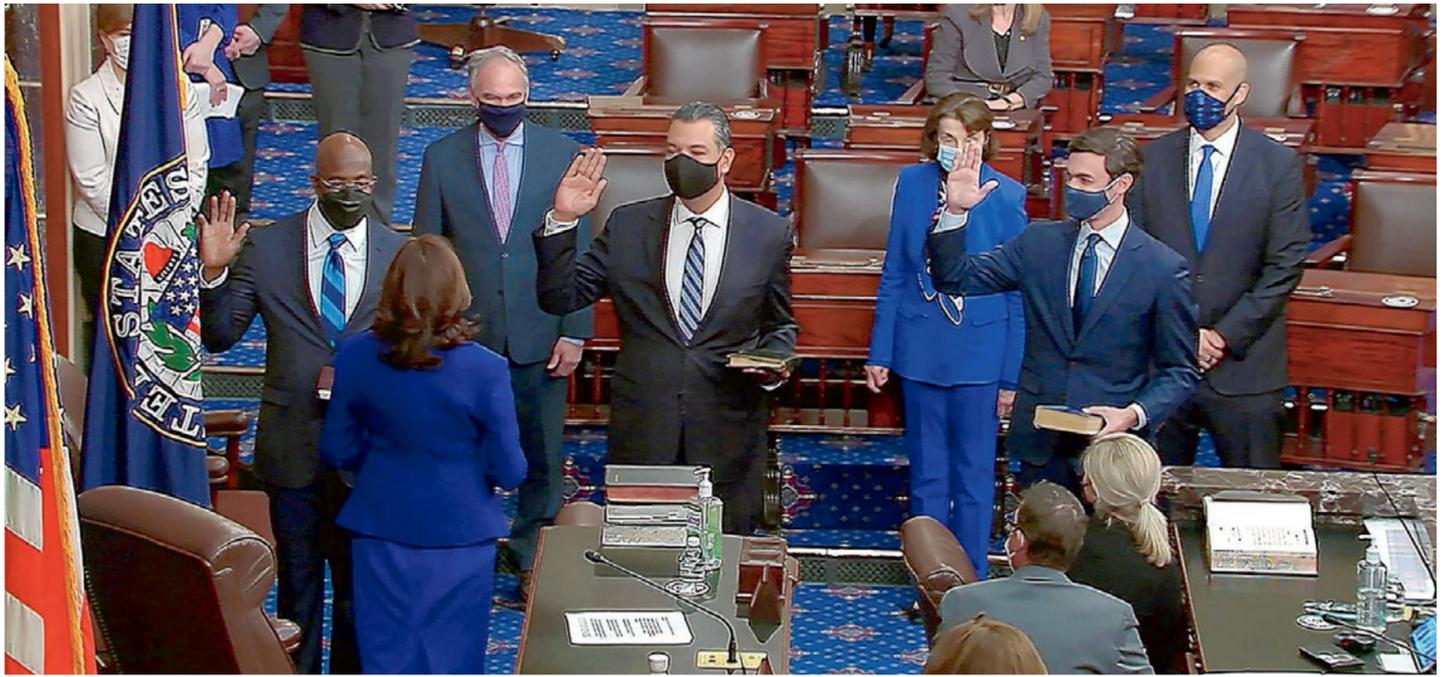
Three new senators were sworn in Wednesday afternoon, delivering control of the chamber to Democrats and cementing the party's grasp on all the reins of political power in Washington for the first time in a decade.

Taking the oath of office were Sens. Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, the winners of Georgia's special elections earlier this month, and Sen. Alex Padilla, picked by California's governor to fill the seat of Vice President Kamala D. Harris.

Ms. Harris, who as vice president serves as presiding officer of the Senate, also gives Democrats the tie-breaking vote, and thus control of the chamber, which otherwise is divided with 50 Republicans and 50 members of the Democratic Caucus (two of whom are formally independents).

The change installs Sen. Charles E. Schumer of New York as the majority leader and relegates Sen. Mitch McConnell, Kentucky Republican, to the minority leader's post.

They were in the middle of negotiations Wednesday over how to organize the Senate, including the size of committees. Mr. McConnell was trying to have the organizing resolution include a firm commitment to the existence of the filibuster, a defining



Vice President Kamala D. Harris swears in Sen. Raphael Warnock (left), Sen. Alex Padilla (center) and Sen. Jon Ossoff on the floor of the Senate on Wednesday. Mr. Warnock and Mr. Ossoff were the Democratic winners of the Georgia runoff races. Mr. Padilla, California Democrat, is filling Ms. Harris' seat. The Democrats now hold a thin majority in the chamber.

feature of the Senate, though one many Democrats appear eager to dispense with in order to push through President Biden's agenda.

The Senate did confirm Mr. Biden's pick to be director of national security Wednesday night, though that was the only one of his Cabinet nominees to receive a floor vote.

Every president dating back to Richard Nixon has gotten at least one Cabinet nominee confirmed on Inauguration Day.

Mr. Schumer on Wednesday challenged senators to work

toward conciliation.

"We have no choice but to try to work together, every day, to reward the faith the American people have placed in us," he said.

Mr. McConnell, for his part, pointed out that Democrats' majority in the House shrank, the Senate is evenly divided, and Mr. Biden ran on a campaign of unity.

"The people intentionally entrusted both political parties with significant power to shape our nation's direction," he said.

The last time the Senate was 50-50 was in 2001, at the

start of the George W. Bush administration.

The close division didn't prevent big action. A tax cut was approved, and the chamber made major progress on immigration legislation.

It's unclear how well the arrangement will work in 2021, though, with Congress more ideologically divided and fewer clear opportunities for bipartisan agreement.

Plus, after the treatment Democrats gave President Trump on usually low-controversy matters

like nominations, there's likely to be some interest in payback.

That may already be playing out.

The Senate, which had still been under GOP control before Wednesday, didn't hold hearings for the new major nominees until Tuesday, when Mr. Biden's picks to lead the State, Defense, Treasury and Homeland Security departments all appeared, as did his pick for intelligence chief.

In the Obama and Trump transitions, hearings had begun at least a week before Inauguration

Day.

"Look, the transition was delayed far too long by President Trump's baseless conspiracy theories about how he won the election," said Sen. Chris Coons, Delaware Democrat.

President Obama saw six of his Cabinet picks confirmed on his first day in office — and he kept on President George W. Bush's defense secretary, so he had seven members of his team installed. Mr. Trump had two picks — at defense and homeland security — installed on his first day.



Environmental Protection Agency administrator Andrew R. Wheeler issued a memo on Wednesday directing that the rabbits being used at EPA labs in North Carolina be retired. Wednesday was his last day in the role.

ENVIRONMENT

Outgoing EPA head orders last-minute pardon to agency's research rabbits

By **STEPHEN DINAN**
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Outgoing EPA chief Andrew R. Wheeler issued a last-minute reprieve he hopes will set free rabbits that have been used for testing at agency labs.

In an order memorialized in an agency memo dated Wednesday, just before Mr. Wheeler's departure, he directed that bunnies being used at Environmental Protection Agency labs in Research Triangle Park in North Carolina be retired.

The memo says the EPA will now take steps to carry out that process.

"We are aware that other federal agencies have worked with nonprofit institutions to care for animals after their use in laboratories. A first step in exploring potential options would likely be to consult with other parts of the federal government that have accomplished similar animal retirement efforts," wrote Alexandra Dapolito Dunn, assistant administrator of the Office

of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, and David Dunlap, deputy assistant administrator at the Office of Research and Development.

They cautioned, though, that there are "many complexities associated with the potential retirement of laboratory animals."

Some of the bunnies involved in EPA research were being used to produce ejaculate for study.

Female rabbits were kept nearby to help males produce usable ejaculate, according to the White Coat Waste Project, which has pushed to rein in government testing using animals.

"Some of the rabbits have been kept at the EPA for nearly a decade. But the bunnies haven't been given the opportunity to be adopted into a home after they were no longer 'useful' as sperm machines," the folks at White Coat said in a piece last year detailing their findings.

White Coat has been pushing to free the bunnies.

"We're proud to have worked with Andrew Wheeler and his

colleagues to secure this last-minute pardon for survivors of EPA's taxpayer-funded animal tests," said Anthony Bellotti, the group's president. "Mr. Wheeler's directive to retire the last of the bunnies in the EPA's taxpayer-funded labs cements his legacy as a policy pioneer who made the once-lofty goal of ending wasteful and cruel taxpayer-funded animal tests a reality."

Mr. Wheeler had previously set a goal for the EPA to end taxpayer-funded animal testing at the agency by 2035.

Mr. Bellotti called that the "gold standard" for other federal agencies to match.

In the memo, the EPA officials said rabbit experimentation at the agency was already on the decline, thanks to new chemical testing methods.

Wednesday's reprieve for the rabbits in North Carolina comes on the last day of the Trump administration, when President Trump issued his own set of pardons for more than 140 humans.

Owls Are Being Mutilated —and You Paid for It!

The bureaucrats at the U.S. government's National Eye Institute are supposed to support vision research to help humans. Instead, they gave Johns Hopkins University \$1.5 million of your tax money to cut into barn owls' skulls, insert electrodes into their brains, and blast them with lights and noises for up to 12 hours. Once their brains are too mutilated to be useful, the owls are killed.

National Eye Institute: Stop funding this cruelty.

Owl: © iStock.com/GlobalP