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The Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee advanced a number of President Obama's agency nominees this November. Those approved include Kathryn Sullivan, nominee for Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Robert Simon, nominee for the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) Associate Director of Energy and Environment, and Jo Handlesman, nominee for the OSTP director of science. All three still must be confirmed by the full Senate before the process is complete.

Senate majority leader Harry Reid (D-NV) recently led Senate Democrats in invoking the "nuclear option," thereby requiring only a simple majority (51 votes) as opposed to the customary supermajority (60 votes) to override filibusters attempting to block presidential judicial and executive-office appointments. Consequently, appointments may proceed more smoothly in the future.

Sources: E&E News, White House
