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U.S. Senate confirms Barrett for Luxembourg ambassador

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The swift confirmation of Tom Barrett to become the next ambassador to Luxembourg sets up a spring election to select his successor.

The U.S. Senate last night confirmed Barrett via voice vote after Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., requested unanimous consent to bring the nomination to the floor. The vote came just a day after Barrett cleared the Foreign Relations Committee unanimously and hadn't been expected to happen so soon.

In a video message last night, Barrett said he received a text message from Schumer's chief of staff that "it's going to get interesting for me in the Senate in a few minutes" just ahead of the request for unanimous consent to approve his nomination.

Barrett said he "absolutely loved" being Milwaukee's mayor and it was a dream come true to serve in the role for 17 years.

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"As I've often said, I'm not running from something, I'm running to something, and I think we all recognize there are different chapters in life, and I'm very, very eager now to start this next chapter," Barrett said.

Earlier in the day, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson said he was working with Republican colleagues to ensure there were no objections to Barrett's nomination. Some of Johnson's fellow Republicans have placed holds on President Biden's nominations to protest his foreign policy, and the Oshkosh Republican said he expected the nomination to proceed and wished Barrett "the best in his continued service."

Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, added, "Congratulations to Tom Barrett who has

committed his life to public service and will now serve with the highest level of integrity as US Ambassador to Luxembourg."

According to the Milwaukee Election Commission, the vacancy would have to occur by Dec. 28 for the Common Council to call a special election to replace Barrett that would coincide with the already scheduled spring election.

Barrett said he wasn't sure the exact timing for him taking on the new role, but expected it to happen by the end of the year.

"What I said all along was I wanted to have this transfer occur in such a way that there would be a special election that would add no cost for the taxpayers," Barrett said. "I think the timing of this meets that."

Common Council President Cavalier Johnson, who has said he will run in the special election to replace Barrett, will become acting mayor once the nearly 17-year incumbent resigns to take his new role.

Following news of Barrett's confirmation, Johnson tweeted, "I'm ready."

Note: This story was updated Dec. 17 with comment from Barrett and Johnson.