

confirmations for Bush nominees to that court, including Judge Duncan, the Fourth Circuit has fewer vacancies today—three—than it did when Republicans claimed no more judges were needed—5 vacancies.

Republicans used every argument they could muster to stop Democratic nominees from being confirmed to the Fourth Circuit, particularly in North Carolina, and now they flip flop to claim that Republican nominees must be confirmed.

When Senator JOHN EDWARDS was elected, he sought out the middle ground on judicial nominations, after years of North Carolina nominees being blocked by Republicans. For example, he should be commended for working with the President on the nomination of Judge Allyson Duncan, an African-American woman who had served as the President of the North Carolina Bar Association, for a seat on the Fourth Circuit. Senator EDWARDS fully supported her confirmation. She was a Republican who had testified in favor of Clarence Thomas' confirmation, but she had a reputation of fairness. With Senator EDWARDS' support, Judge Duncan was confirmed. He broke through the Republican logjam in this circuit. Senator EDWARDS also acted with bipartisanship in supporting the confirmation of two Bush nominees to the district court, Judge Brent McKnight and Judge Louise Flanagan.

Senator EDWARDS has sought out compromise with his fellow North Carolina Senators on judicial nominations, but they have, by and large, refused to help find a middle ground. He has supported the proposal of the North Carolina Bar Association that the State establish a bipartisan merit selection commission to propose nominees to the President, Republican or Democratic, to create a long-term solution to impasses that are created by any Senator's insistence on his choice alone, with no compromise, for these lifetime seats of trust on the Federal bench. Unlike President Bush, Senator EDWARDS understands what it means in reality to be a uniter and not a divider. He comes from a part of the country that understands deeply how important it is that leaders seek to unite people across racial, economic and political lines rather than to divide them.

Senator EDWARDS has stood up to efforts by this President to pack the courts with people whose records do not demonstrate that they will be fair judges to all who come before them, rich or poor, Democrats or Republicans, or any race or background. He has expressed concerns about Bush nominees Judge Boyle as well as James Dever, a 40-year-old Federalist Society member and Republican Party activist. President Bush has repeatedly claimed that he is opposed to judicial activism while he has simultaneously nominated activists for judicial positions.

He would not support the confirmation or recess appointment of a judicial nominee who violated judicial ethics to

reduce the sentence of a convicted cross burner, as President Bush did over the holiday celebrating the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King. Senator EDWARDS opposed other Bush judicial nominees whose record demonstrate insensitivity or hostility toward the civil rights and the blessings of liberty guaranteed to all Americans. Just yesterday, President Bush nominated Keith Starrett to the vacancy created by Judge Pickering's recess appointment and by his resignation from the district court. This nomination shows again the President's insensitivity to the wishes of so many in the South District of Mississippi by passing over qualified African-American candidates for that powerful district court seat. In act, this President has chosen narrow ideological purity over diversity by nominating more people involved with the Federalist Society than African Americans, Hispanics and Asian Americans combined.

The biggest problem in the judicial nominations process is not with the Senate but with the White House. The judicial nominations process begins with the President, and President Bush has chosen to divide the Senate and the American people with his judicial nominations, instead of to unite us. The administration is intent on undermining the independence of the Federal judiciary and on making it a clone of the Republican Party. The President and his aides have shown the same unilateralism and arrogance to the Senate in their handling of judicial nominations that they have shown in so many other important policy areas.

I commend Senator EDWARDS for breaking through the Republican logjam on appointments from North Carolina to the Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. He has sought out the middle ground while also standing firm in his efforts to protect the right of the people to fair judges in our Federal courts. The American people deserve an independent judiciary with fair judges who will enforce their rights and uphold the law.

DRUG PRICING DISCOUNTS

Mr. CORZINE. Mr. President, I rise today to commend Pfizer, Inc., for its new initiative to provide discounts of between 15 and 50 percent off retail prices of its drug inventory to any uninsured American, regardless of age or income. We have been grappling with the issue of quality, affordable healthcare and accessibility to prescription drugs for some time. I think all of us in Congress believe this is one of our most critical challenges. A lot of thoughtful work has gone in to trying to address this, but from my perspective, we have had only limited success to date. As an industry leader, Pfizer has really stepped up to the plate to fill in some of the gaps that we all acknowledge still exist.

The recently passed Medicare reform bill gives limited assistance to seniors

and the disabled but leaves 44 million other uninsured Americans without coverage for their medications. The new program Pfizer is undertaking will offer assistance to those Americans who are not eligible for help under the Medicare plan. Pfizer's effort is truly a model of corporate responsibility, and I applaud the company for its example. I am particularly proud that Pfizer has a strong commitment to my State of New Jersey, with over 3,700 employees there.

We can especially appreciate that this new program covers a range of circumstances. It is widely acknowledged that expanded access to prescription drugs is integral to improving the health and quality of life for millions of Americans. By offering substantial discounts on its entire drug inventory, including the widely used Lipitor, Celebrex and Zoloft, Pfizer is taking an innovative and proactive approach to providing relief to the many Americans who would have gone without these vital medicines because they could not afford them.

In addition, there are 27 advocacy groups that have joined in support of the Pfizer initiative. This kind of collaboration between industry and community-based organizations represents public-private partnerships of the best kind. I am pleased to join with so many others in commending Pfizer's groundbreaking announcement, and look forward to working with all my colleagues in Congress on efforts to provide quality, affordable prescription drug coverage to all Americans.

USS "RONALD REAGAN"

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, last month California bid farewell to President Ronald Reagan. This month, on a happier note, we are greeting a great new ship named in his honor. On July 23, 2004, the people of California will welcome the USS *Ronald Reagan*, CVN 76, to her new homeport in San Diego.

As the Navy's newest and most technologically sophisticated aircraft carrier, the *Reagan* will project tactical airpower over the sea and inland while providing critical sea-based air defense and antisubmarine warfare capabilities.

It is proper and fitting that the new carrier be based in our State: Ronald Reagan was one of California's own. Though he traveled the world and served two terms in the White House, he always called California his home.

The *Reagan* crew will find a warm welcome in San Diego, a beautiful and vibrant city that is proud to be a navy town. San Diego is a cornerstone of America's national defense, and the Navy is a cornerstone of San Diego.

On behalf of the people of California, I want to welcome the USS *Ronald Reagan* and her crew to your new homeport. We are pleased and proud to have you with us, and we will do all we can to make you feel at home.