Before the July 4 holiday, we will do everything we can to help stop kids from smoking before they start, make tobacco products less toxic, and make sure tobacco companies are honest with the American people about the dangers of smoking.

We will pass the conference report of the supplemental appropriations bill we passed last month—a bill that gives our brave troops the resources they need to do their jobs and return home safely.

Both the HELP and Finance Committees will continue to work on health care reform legislation, the top priority of President Obama and millions of Americans. Both committees hope to report out legislation before our July 4 recess.

We will begin work on a number of appropriations bills and, with Republican cooperation, we would like to finish work on some of those. I spoke to the Republican leader a few minutes ago, and we will have a plan to move forward on some of those appropriations bills.

We will continue working to confirm President Obama's many nominees for critical positions. Those who have chosen to serve our country must be able to get to work without delay.

We will begin the process of reviewing the most high-profile nomination of all, which is President Obama's outstanding pick for the Supreme Court. Judge Sotomayor's record and qualifications are terrific and tremendous. In fact, if she is confirmed, she will bring to the bench more judicial experience than any sitting justice had when they joined the Court.

Judge Sotomayor's experience comes not only from the legal world but the real world as well. Her understanding of the law is grounded not only in theory but also practice.

Several Senators will have the pleasure of meeting with Judge Sotomayor this week, and I know they will be impressed. She deserves a fair and respectful hearing, and I know she will get that. I will do all I can to ensure she gets that and that Senators get what they require as quickly as possible. I wish to make sure she is ready to go when the new term starts.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we are going to be in a period of morning business for a while today. We have a matter that is on the calendar dealing with railroad antitrust. It is pretty clear most Senators agree there is a compromise that has been worked on, on a bipartisan basis. We will see if we can have a vote on cloture vitiated, and we will go directly to the matter.

I have spoken to the Republican leader on how we are going to proceed on the tobacco legislation. It is not quite clear yet. We need to move forward and protect the ability to offer amendments. If consent is granted on the railroad bill, we would extend morning business throughout the day.

There will be no votes today. Senators should expect one tomorrow around 11 a.m.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

READY TO GO

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, let me say to the distinguished majority leader welcome back from the recess. It is good to see him. We are ready to get to work.

NOMINATION OF JUDGE SONIA SOTOMAYOR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on the matter of the Supreme Court, I note that I spoke with the President's nominee, Judge Sotomayor, over the recess, and I assured her she would be treated fairly and respectfully during the confirmation process. I will deliver the same message when the two of us have a chance to sit down and talk later this week.

Republicans take very seriously our obligation to review anyone who is nominated to a lifetime position on our Nation's highest Court. The Senate will therefore thoroughly review Judge Sotomayor's judicial record to ensure a full and informed debate over her qualifications to become one of the chief guardians of our Nation's Constitution and its laws. We believe the American people expect nothing less.

Judge Sotomayor is no stranger to the process. This will be the third time she has come before the Senate for confirmation to the Federal bench. In considering her for a seat on the Supreme Court, the standards for review become understandably more rigorous, as the Vice President observed when he chaired the Judiciary Committee. Yet the basic qualities we look for in our justices are the same qualities we look for in any Federal judge: superb legal ability, personal integrity, sound temperament, and, most importantly, a commitment to read the law evenhandedly.

In this last respect, some of Judge Sotomayor's past statements and decisions have raised some understandable questions and concerns. One of these is a statement she made a few years back that the Court of Appeals is, ''Where policy is made.'' I think that is a tough statement to square with Article III of the U.S. Constitution, which clearly contemplates a far more limited role for Federal judges, and I suspect that a number of us over here in the legislative branch will want to ask Judge Sotomayor questions about that statement.

The reason is simple. I think most Americans would agree that the courtroom is not an appropriate place to exercise one's political beliefs or personal preferences. As far as most of us are concerned, politics ends at the courthouse door. The courtroom is where you go to get a fair and evenhanded reading of the law, regardless of who you are or where you came from or who you voted for. Legislators make the laws, not judges. Most people understand that and place a high value on it. And the last time Judge Sotomayor came before the Senate for confirmation, I voted against her nomination precisely out of a concern that she would bring pre-existing personal and political beliefs into the courtroom.

Many of the same concerns I had about Judge Sotomayor 11 years ago persist. But a fresh review of her record has now begun and, as I said, Republicans will insist that the confirmation process for Judge Sotomayor is conducted in a fair and professional manner. This is the way Republicans have treated judicial nominees in the past, and this is the way we will continue to treat them: with respect.

But respectful doesn't mean rushed. Judge Sotomayor has a long record, and it will take a long time to get through it. She has served 17 years on both the trial and the appellate court. She has been involved in more than 3,600 cases since becoming a judge. In order to conduct a thorough examination of all these cases, it is vital that the Senate have sufficient time to do so.

During the last three Supreme Court confirmations, the average amount of time the Senate had to prepare for a hearing was more than 60 days. For Justice Alito, the Senate had 70 days to prepare for an informed hearing. And like Judge Sotomayor, Justice Alito had thousands of cases for Senators to review. Our Democrat colleagues who were in the minority during the Alito nomination appreciated the fairness they were afforded; both the senior Senator from Vermont and the senior Senator from New York noted at the time that in handling the Alito nomination it was important to do it right, not quick.

This time around, our friend Senator SCHUMER notes that Judge Sotomayor has a very ''extensive'' record, and we certainly have a ''right'' to ''scrutinize'' it. So in considering this nomination I am confident our Democratic colleagues will treat us fairly and allow us to do it ''right.''

Throughout this process, Republicans will be guided by a few simple principles. But perhaps the most important ones are these: Americans expect and should receive equal treatment under the law, and Americans want judges who understand their role is to interpret the law, not write it. As Chief Justice Roberts put it during his confirmation hearing, the American people expect a judge to be like an umpire—someone who applies the rules but doesn't make them. No one ever went to a ballgame, as he put it, to watch the umpire.

Lawmakers make law, and they have to answer for those laws every 2 or 6 years to the voters. Federal judges, on the other hand, never have to face the voters, and thus aren't supposed to