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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, May 8, 2015, at 11 a.m.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2015

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Holy God, thank You for daily blessings and mercies, for You fill the void of our spirits with Your abiding presence. Lord, You provide us with strength for each day and hope for each tomorrow. Your ways are just and true.

Supply all the needs of our Senators. Give them wisdom to solve the complex problems of our time. Help them to express their gratitude to You with deeds of faith and compassion. Lord, use them to call us out of the night of selfish living to the sunrise of sacrifice and service. Continue to be their refuge and strength, a very present help for every trial.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PAUL). The Democratic leader is recognized.

PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we have all heard the legal maxim “Justice delayed is justice denied,” and it is really applicable to what is going on in the Senate today. Here in this body, justice is being delayed by the Republican majority. The refusal of the Senate Republicans to heed their constitutional duty to provide advice and consent on judicial nominations is an injustice to the American people.

So far this year, the Senate has confirmed two judicial nominations—just two—in more than 4 months. By contrast, in 2007, my first year as majority leader during the Bush administration, we had already confirmed 16 nominations. If the Republican majority keeps up their current trend of ignoring judicial nominees, by the end of this year we will have confirmed five for an entire year. The last time the Senate confirmed so few Presidential nominations was, unsurprisingly, when we had a Republican majority here in the Senate under the Clinton administration. It is funny how history repeats itself.

The Federal courts depend on the Senate to do its job so justice can be dispensed in courtrooms all across the country. As of today, there are 55 Federal court vacancies, 24 of which are classified as emergencies. At the beginning of the year, there were only 12 judicial emergencies, but now it is double that—24. These vacancies create a backlog of cases, effectively delaying justice for plaintiffs and defendants, for prosecutors and the accused, and for the sitting judges who are trying their best to administer justice, but

they can’t do their work because they are so overwhelmed with work.

This is about more than judges and lawyers. This is about the people who come before the courts, people who have cases that have been waiting and waiting. This is about a prosecutor who is going after somebody who, in their opinion, has done something really bad. We have all heard the expression “They are trying to make a Federal case out of it.” The reason they say that is because Federal prosecutors do such a great job. But if they have to wait and wait until there is availability in the courtroom, witnesses disappear and it makes it much more difficult.

What has happened to our judicial system is, because of the Republicans, we are having justice delayed. This is unconscionable.

It is no wonder Republicans are scrambling for cover on judicial nominations. They are scrambling because they have been ignoring their constitutional duty.

This afternoon, the courts are going to be looked at by the Judiciary Committee. In fact, the committee is going to hold a hearing on several delayed judicial nominations. But everyone should look at Felipe Restrepo, the President’s nominee to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. That is in Pennsylvania and other places—a very important circuit. Despite being nominated by the President 6 months ago, this man is not even going to be on the calendar. And this is what was done previously. The man, my friend, who is chair of the Committee on Finance, was chair of the Judiciary Committee

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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