

hand-in-hand to Capitol Hill with a simple demand: to keep them safe from guns.

Members of Congress should tune out the NRA, and start listening to these children—who have to face the fear of guns everyday. The children from across the country are pleading that Congress create an environment free from fear and violence. These children are armed, not with firearms, but with letters, urging Congress to end the epidemic of gun violence that claims the lives of thousands of their peers each year.

Yet, while Congress should be passing comprehensive legislation to prevent school shootings like those in Conyers, Littleton, Springfield, Edinboro, Jonesboro, West Paducah, Pearl and the many others, it cannot even muster enough votes to take UZIs and AK-47s out of the hands of 15 year olds. After Columbine, the Senate took a few steps to protect children from gun violence. We passed legislation to prohibit juveniles from owning semiautomatic weapons and large capacity ammunition devices. We passed an amendment to require that handguns be sold with trigger locking devices to protect children. And we passed an amendment to close the gun show loophole, ensuring juveniles and others cannot use these shows as a convenient way to circumvent the safeguards applied to normal sales through licensed gun dealers.

That legislation was a first step, but it still falls short of closing loopholes which allow our youth easy access to deadly weapons. For example, one of our most important tasks yet will be to ban handguns and semiautomatic assault weapons for persons under 21 years of age. Yet, even the most minimal effort to end gun violence has been stymied in the House of Representatives, where they have passed no gun safety legislation. And any effort to come to some agreement has been repeatedly stalled by the Republican leadership.

It was great to welcome such a group of dedicated young people to the nation's Capitol. I encourage them to keep up their effort and to speak out for those children who have been silenced by guns. Over time, these children are sure to accomplish what other nations have done: end the plague of gun violence.

LONG-PENDING JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I thank the Majority Leader for the proposal he made to the Senate last night on moving a portion of the Executive Calendar. I would like to see those nominees he mentioned confirmed as well as the others on the calendar. I want to work with him to have them all considered and confirmed. I want to be sure that the Senate treats them all fairly

and accords each of them an opportunity for an up or down vote. I want to share with you a few of the cases that cry out for a Senate vote:

The first is Judge Richard Paez. He is a judicial nominee who has been awaiting consideration and confirmation by the Senate since January 1996—for over 3½ years. The vacancy for which Judge Paez was nominated became a judicial emergency during the time his nomination has been pending without action by the Senate. His nomination was first received by the Senate almost 45 months ago and is still without a Senate vote. That is unconscionable.

Judge Paez has twice been reported favorably by the Senate Judiciary Committee to the Senate for final action. He is again on the Senate calendar. He was delayed 25 months before finally being accorded a confirmation hearing in February 1998. After being reported by the Judiciary Committee initially in March 1998, his nomination was held on the Senate Executive Calendar without action or explanation for over 7 months, for the remainder of the last Congress.

Judge Paez was renominated by the President again this year and his nomination was stalled without action before the Judiciary Committee until late July, when the Committee reported his nomination to the Senate for the second time. The Senate refused to consider the nomination before the August recess. I have repeatedly urged the Republican leadership to call this nomination up for consideration and a vote. The Republican leadership in the Senate has refused to schedule this nomination for an up or down vote.

Judge Paez has the strong support of both California Senators and a 'well-qualified' rating from the American Bar Association. He has served as a municipal judge for 13 years and as a federal judge for four years.

In my view Judge Paez should be commended for the years he worked to provide legal services and access to our justice system for those without the financial resources otherwise to retain counsel. His work with the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, the Western Center on Law and Poverty and California Rural Legal Assistance for 9 years should be a source of praise and pride.

Judge Paez has had the strong support of California judges and law enforcement representatives familiar with his work, such as Justice H. Walter Crosky, and support from an impressive array of law enforcement officials, including Gil Garcetti, the Los Angeles District Attorney; the late Sherman Block, then Los Angeles County Sheriff; the Los Angeles County Police Chiefs' Association; and the Association for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs.

I have previously commended the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee

for his support of this nominee and Senator BOXER and Senator FEINSTEIN of California for their efforts on his behalf. In the Senate's vote earlier this month on the nomination of Justice Ronnie White, Republican Senators justified their vote by deferring to home state Senators and local law enforcement. When it comes to Judge Paez, he has the strong support of both home state Senators and local law enforcement. Accordingly, I would hope and expect that the Senate will see a strong Republican vote for Judge Paez.

The Hispanic National Bar Association, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, and many, many others have been seeking a vote on this nomination for what now amounts to years.

Last year the words of the Chief Justice of the United States were ringing in our ears with respect to the delays in Senate consideration of judicial nomination. He had written:

Some current nominees have been waiting considerable time for a Senate Judiciary Committee vote or a final floor vote. . . . The Senate is surely under no obligation to confirm any particular nominee, but after the necessary time for inquiry it should vote him up or vote him down.

Richard Paez's nomination to the Ninth Circuit had already been pending for 24 months when the Chief Justice issued that statement—and that was almost 2 years ago. The Chief Justice's words resound in connection with the nomination of Judge Paez. He has twice been reported favorably by the Judiciary Committee. It was been pending for 45 months. The court to which he was nominated has multiple vacancies. In fairness to Judge Paez and all the people served by the Ninth Circuit, the Senate should vote on this nomination.

I have been concerned for the last several years that it seems women and minority nominees are being delayed and not considered. I spoke to the Senate about this situation on May 22, June 22 and, again, on October 8 last year, and a number of times this year, including on October 15 and October 21. Over the last couple of years the Senate has failed to act on the nominations of Judge James A. Beaty, Jr. to be the first African-American judge on the Fourth Circuit; Jorge C. Rangel to the Fifth Circuit; Clarence J. Sundram to the District Court for the Northern District of New York; Anabelle Rodriguez to the District Court in Puerto Rico; and many others.

In explaining why he chose to withdraw from consideration for renomination after waiting 15 months for Senate action, Jorge Rangel wrote to the President and explained:

Our judicial system depends on men and women of good will who agree to serve when