

CONCLUSION OF MORNING
BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF ALBERTO R.
GONZALES TO BE ATTORNEY
GENERAL OF THE UNITED
STATES

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume executive session for the consideration of Executive Calendar No. 8, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Alberto R. Gonzales, of Texas, to be Attorney General.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 8 hours of debate equally divided between the Senator from Pennsylvania, Mr. SPECTER, and the Senator from Vermont, Mr. LEAHY, or their designees.

Under the previous order, time shall alternate every 30 minutes between the majority and minority for the first 2 hours, with the first 30 minutes under the control of the majority.

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to support a man of remarkable achievement, Judge Alberto Gonzales, to be the next Attorney General of the United States.

Judge Gonzales is proof that in America, there are no artificial barriers to success. A man or a woman can climb to any height that his or her talents can take them. For Judge Gonzales, that is a very high altitude indeed. And luckily for his country, he is not finished climbing yet.

Judge Gonzales is quite literally from humble beginnings. He was raised in the town of Humble, with seven siblings. The eight of them, and their mom and dad, lived in a small two-bedroom house that Judge Gonzales's father and uncles built from scratch.

Judge Gonzales's parents were both migrant workers of Mexican descent. They met while picking crops in the fields of south Texas. Both spoke little English, and had only 8 years of schooling between them. The house they raised Al in had no hot water or telephone.

But by teaching their gifted young son the value of perseverance and hard work, Pablo and Maria Gonzales raised a man who has been one of the most trusted advisors to the President of the United States.

Judge Gonzales got his first job when he was 12. He sold Cokes at Rice University football games. No one in his family had ever gone to college, and at that age Al didn't expect to either. When each football game ended, and the Rice students streamed out of the

gates and back to their dorms, Al wondered about the world of education they were going back to.

He graduated from MacArthur Senior High School, a Houston public school, after challenging himself in college preparatory classes. He enlisted in the Air Force and was stationed north of the Arctic Circle at Fort Yukon, AK. Those North Pole winds must have been a lot colder than anything he ever felt in Texas. It was probably a shock to young Al.

At the urging of his officers, Judge Gonzales applied and was accepted into the United States Air Force Academy. Our armed services are superb at finding and grooming talented Americans, and they succeeded again by pushing Judge Gonzales to the fore.

And then, in one of the moments where life begins to come full circle, Al transferred from the Air Force Academy to the very prestigious Rice University—the same Rice University where he had sold Cokes at football games as a boy. He fulfilled his 10-year dream of attending his hometown's preeminent institution.

He excelled at Rice and immediately entered Harvard Law School. Before the ink on his Harvard Law diploma was dry, he was recruited by the number-one law firm in Houston, one of the most esteemed firms in the Nation.

Judge Gonzales built himself from very modest beginnings to become one of the most distinguished attorneys in the country. A lot of us here are lawyers. We can tell the good ones from the mediocre ones, and Judge Gonzales is one of the best.

He could have stayed a highly paid Houston attorney. But he has answered the call to serve his country. Not just once, but again and again.

First he served as General Counsel to Governor Bush in Texas. Then the Governor appointed him as Texas's Secretary of State. Next, he was selected as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas. Then, he was asked to serve as Counsel to the President. Now he has been selected to be the 80th Attorney General of the United States—the first Hispanic-American to be the Nation's top law-enforcement officer.

But some in this body have made it clear they don't care about Judge Gonzales's exemplary record of service.

I want to rebut some galling allegations a few of my Democratic friends have made about Judge Gonzales. For instance, that he supports torture. I even saw one outrageous ad that juxtaposed Judge Gonzales's face with a picture of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib. Attempts to tar Judge Gonzales with this dirty brush are despicable.

Let me be clear: Judge Gonzales, President Bush, and the administration have never supported torture or the inhumane treatment of terrorist prisoners. Never.

Anybody who tries to tie Judge Gonzales to the depraved acts of a few twisted renegades ought to be ashamed.

Judge Gonzales has stated repeatedly that he does not support torture. He has stated repeatedly that no matter the answer to the question of whether al-Qaida terrorists deserve the privileges accorded to lawful combatants under the Geneva Conventions, it is the policy of this President that every prisoner will be treated humanely. And he has been repeating this long before he was the Attorney General nominee.

I am very disappointed that some of my colleagues refuse to acknowledge the frightening situation that President Bush faced after September 11. That a determined gang of terrorists could so easily kill 3,000 Americans. That many more terrorist cells may be poised to strike. Were our schools, our sports stadiums, our city halls safe? Even the postal system couldn't be trusted.

In that environment, Judge Gonzales aggressively explored every possible lawful means of gaining information about the terrorists, and their plots to murder innocent Americans. He was absolutely right to do so. He was fighting on behalf of his client, the United States of America. With the lives of his countrymen at stake, any less would have been a dereliction of duty.

Judge Gonzales doesn't owe anybody an apology for his record. But some owe him an apology, for rimmacking him with phony allegations instead of honoring his willingness to serve his country.

Some have also criticized Judge Gonzales for supposedly not being sufficiently forthcoming with answers to questions from the Judiciary Committee. This is demonstrably untrue: Judge Gonzales has been extremely cooperative, and he has been asked far more questions than other Attorney General nominees in recent memory.

Judge Gonzales answered every question put to him at the committee's hearing, and then received hundreds of written questions afterward. Within days, he returned to the committee over 440 responses. I repeat: Within days, he returned to the committee over 440 responses. Then the committee asked Judge Gonzales even more questions, despite the fact that the deadline for questions imposed by the chairman had already passed. And still, Judge Gonzales graciously provided an additional 54 responses to every question that the Judiciary Committee could think of.

By contrast, Attorney General Janet Reno got only 35 questions from the Judiciary Committee in 1993. And records show she responded a whopping 9 months after she was confirmed. Let me repeat that. Janet Reno got 35