

The Senate must also confirm nominees who will help protect America's national security. In this time of war, we need a strong Department of Justice. Yet the Senate has not voted on seven nominations for senior leadership positions at the Department. I remember being criticized for having too many vacancies at the Justice Department. We stepped up. We sent good names up, and now it's time for those critics to act.

One of the vacancies is for Deputy Attorney General. The Deputy Attorney General helps lead efforts to detect and prevent terrorist attacks here at home. I've selected an outstanding nominee for this position, Judge Mark Filip. I'm sorry that he's not here. He's dealing with a serious family matter. This former prosecutor has earned a reputation for being fairminded and dedicated.

Several years ago, the Senate confirmed him unanimously for a lifetime position on the Federal bench. In other words, this isn't the first time he's gone through a confirmation process. If the Senate can confirm this good man for a lifetime post, there's no reason the Senate cannot confirm him to spend the next year protecting the American people. Yet one Senator has placed a hold on this nomination because of an issue that has nothing to do with the judge. This is unacceptable. Senators need to base their decisions on the judge's qualifications for the job; they need to bring this nomination to the floor for a vote; and they need to confirm this good man.

As Senators confirm these nominees, they also must confirm judges to the Federal bench. I've nominated good men and women who will rule by the letter of the law, not the whim of the gavel. I thank the Senators on both sides of the aisle, like Mitch McConnell, Jon Kyl and Arlen and Dianne Feinstein and Thad Cochran, for helping confirm fine judges like Leslie Southwick.

Unfortunately, some of their colleagues continue to delay votes for 28 of my other nominees. The Senate has sat on these nominations to the court of appeals for nearly 600 days. And in some cases, the Senate has imposed a new and extra constitutional standard where nominees who have the support of the majority of the Senate can be blocked by a minority of obstructionists. As a result, some

judgeships can go unfulfilled for years and justice can be delayed for the American people.

Our courts should render swift decisions. That's what we expect, and so should the United States Senate. Many of my nominees would fill urgent vacancies on courts that are understaffed and overworked. I've sent the Senate three nominees to relieve such a situation on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. Bob Conrad and Steve Matthews and Rod Rosenstein are with us today. These are my nominees. They are accomplished members of the legal community. They will be outstanding members of this court. Yet the Senate has not acted on their nominations. This delay is irresponsible. It undermines the cause of justice. And the United States Senate needs to bring every one of my judicial nominations to the floor for an up-or-down vote.

When men and women agree to serve in public office, we should treat them with respect and dignity. When the Senate fails to do this, it leaves important positions in our Government vacant for months at a time, and it makes it harder for future Presidents to be able to attract good people to serve the United States of America.

We've got to—I'm really grateful for the many talented and dedicated and patriotic men and women who have answered the call to service. And now my call to the United States Senate is this: Rise to your responsibilities; give these nominees the vote they deserve; and confirm them as soon as possible.

Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks on Signing the Executive Order to Improve the Coordination and Effectiveness of Youth Programs

February 7, 2008

Thank you all. Thanks. Please be seated. Thank you for joining Laura and me. I've got two jobs. One is I'm going to sign an

Executive order here in a minute. I'm making sure that all Agencies involved with Helping America's Youth coordinate their activities. And then I've got to introduce Laura. [Laughter]

I appreciate very much those of you who are committed to helping our country by saving souls and by giving people hope. I think it's—I can't think of a more noble cause than to serve America. And there's all kinds of ways to serve America. One way is to wear the uniform. Another way is to find—somebody wonders whether or not there's a positive future in their lives, and put your arm around them and say, "I love you; what can I do to help you?"

That happens, by the way, all across America. And it doesn't take one single law to cause somebody to love a neighbor. It does take a law; it's just—it's a higher law. It's a law from a higher inspiration than government. And so today Laura and I welcome those who are neighborhood healers and helpers. We really appreciate your focus on helping our Nation's youth, particularly boys.

In my State of the Union a couple of years ago, I talked about the initiative that we're honoring today, and it's an initiative that says, there is a better future for America's young folks. And we've set some important goals. And one of the goals inside this administration is to make sure that those people who are responsible for spending taxpayers' money on these programs actually coordinate their efforts and set high standards. A lot of times in government we don't do a very good job of measuring, and so the idea is to set standards and to coordinate, but the idea is also to empower those who are on the frontlines of saving lives.

I like to say, government is not really about love. There may be loving people in government, but government itself is laws and justice. Love is found in the hearts of our citizens who are in the neighborhoods.

And so the Executive order I'm going to sign is to—all aimed at kind of leaving behind a structure so that whoever is lucky enough to follow me—[laughter]—will see a blueprint on how to help, really, people realize the great promise of the country.

I believe we solve—save souls one person at a time. And I like to remind our fellow

citizens, while one person can't save every soul, one person can save a soul. And it's that cumulative effort of love and compassion and work that will define a hopeful future. And somebody who shares that same passion about recognizing the true strength of America lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens and someone who cares deeply about making sure the young in America have a bright future is our speaker, my wife, the First Lady, Laura Bush.

[At this point, the First Lady spoke, then a video was watched, and the President signed the Executive order.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:54 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Executive Order 13459. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Executive Order 13459—Improving the Coordination and Effectiveness of Youth Programs

February 7, 2008

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in recognition of the successful interagency collaboration resulting from the *Helping America's Youth* initiative, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Policy. It is the policy of the Federal Government to promote achievement of positive results for at-risk youth through:

(a) enhanced collaboration among government organizations at the Federal, State, and local level, including with faith-based and other community organizations, as well as among families, schools, and communities, in order to leverage existing resources and improve outcomes;

(b) identification and dissemination of promising strategies and practices that have been proven effective through rigorous evaluation; and

(c) online publication of essential information to assist interested citizens and decision-makers, particularly at the community level, to plan, implement, and participate in effective programs for at-risk youth.