

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2025

Remarks on Federal Judicial Nominations

January 2, 2025

The President. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you. I'm sure you're clapping because I finally showed up. [*Laughter*]

Terrorist Attack in New Orleans, Louisiana, and Vehicular Explosion in Las Vegas, Nevada

I do apologize. We had a very busy schedule the last—over—from New Year's Day on, dealing with two crises—one in Louisiana and one in Las Vegas. And I've assembled the entire defense and intelligence apparatus of the country in the Situation Room, and we've been spending a lot of time there. But I'm going to take another 2 minutes to talk a little bit about that and then go on to the—what we're here for.

I want to give an update on the investigations into yesterday's terrorist attacks in New Orleans and the truck explosion in Las Vegas. I've just come from the meeting—not "just," it's been—while we've prepared these remarks—better part of an hour—from my homeland security team. The number of people killed in New Orleans has risen to 15, including the attacker. Thirty-five people were injured.

Today the FBI briefed me that, as of now, no information—we have no information that anyone else was involved in the attack. They've established that the attacker was the same person who planted the explosives in those ice coolers in two nearby locations in the French Quarter just a few hours before he rammed into the crowd with his vehicle.

They assessed, he had a remote detonator in his vehicle to set off those two ice chests. So there's no question that—remember all the talk about other people were involved, placed them? They have him—they have established he's there and even established that he had a detonator to explode those ice chests.

As I said yesterday, the attacker posted several videos just several hours before the attack, indicating his strong support for ISIS. Federal law enforcement and the intelligence community are actively investigating any foreign or domestic contacts or connections that could possibly be relevant to the attack.

And so we're also continuing to investigate whether or not there's any connection between the New Orleans attack and the explosion in Las Vegas. As of now—as of now—I've just briefed, they have not found any evidence of such a connection thus far. I've directed them to keep looking.

The individual who rented the truck to explode—that exploded in Las Vegas also served as Active Duty U.S. Army. And the FBI is working with the Department of Defense on investigating, including the servicemember's possible motives and all those he worked with in—who served with him—what things he'd say and do.

I directed my team to accelerate these investigations so we have answers to our unanswered questions. And I'm making every single resource available to get the job done. And we're going to share the facts as soon as I learn them so the American public doesn't have to wonder.

In the meantime, like I said last night, New Orleans is a city of tremendous spirit. It can't keep it down—you really can't. And we are seeing that today. The Sugar Bowl is back on. Kickoff is going to take off very shortly. If I don't get this damn thing done, we're going to be in

real trouble. [Laughter] And the FBI is handing control to Bourbon Street back to local officials, security of the area has been reinforced, and it should be open for business later today. The—Bourbon Street.

The people of New Orleans are sending an unmistakable message: They will not let this attack or the attacks—attacker's—his deluded ideology overcome us. None of us should fear it will—he'll overcome us.

And we're going to relentlessly pursue ISIS and other terrorist organizations where they are, and they'll find no safe harbor here.

I'll continue to provide updates on New Orleans and Las Vegas as the facts develop.

Federal Judicial Nominations

Now to the business at hand. I can't tell you how much I appreciate these two men. Not a joke. You know, I want to—the fact of the matter is that the—Majority Leader Schumer and Chair Durbin, they—their leadership has been invaluable.

You know, from my days of leading the Senate Judiciary Committee 200 years ago—[laughter]—I have made judicial nominations a priority. And some of you may remember, I was involved in some very contentious Supreme Court nominations over the years.

And today I want to recognize a major milestone. The Senate recently confirmed its 235th Federal judge, which is the largest number of confirmations in a single Presidential term since the early eighties. That includes 1 Supreme Court Justice, 45 circuit court of appeal judges, 187 district court judges, and 2 judges on the Court of International Trade.

And they represent the best of America. This is all about preserving the Constitution. I made two—three speeches in this campaign—in this—my term as President. One when I first entered, saying democracy is at stake. One I later made at—anyway. I made three major speeches. The institutions are in jeopardy, in my view. And some of the decisions coming down, to me, made no constitutional sense.

They're all highly qualified people we've—[inaudible]. They've had distinguished legal, judicial, and academic careers.

It matters. Judges matter. You know, shaping the everyday lives of Americans. Protecting our basic freedoms. I never thought we'd be talking about this. Defending constitutional liberties. Replacing—you know, respecting the idea precedent matters—precedent matters.

These judges will be independent, they'll be fair, and they'll be impartial, and they'll respect the rule of law. And most importantly—I know this sounds—I never thought I'd be saying this—they'd—they'll uphold the Constitution. They'll uphold the Constitution.

When I ran for President, I made a promise that I'd have a bench that looks like America that taps into the full talents of this Nation. And I'm proud we've kept our commitment, with the help of these two men and many others, bolstering confidence in judicial decisionmaking and outcomes.

We have a record number of judges with backgrounds and experiences that have long been overlooked in the Federal judiciary, like advocates for civil rights, workers rights, immigrant rights, and so much more—the first former public defender to sit in the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals.

I've also continued to put forward men and women who have been prosecutors and plaintiff's attorneys, which has been a distant past in the—of courts.

No matter who they are or where they come from, all these appointees—all these appointees—understand the role of a judge and are committed to the rule of law, the institutional safeguards built on our Constitution, that upholds the rights and guarantees of the Constitution.

You know, I have appointed the most demographically diverse slate of judicial nominees ever in the history of America that represents all of America and the best of America.

There is numerous—there is numerous historic firsts. The first Black woman on the United States Supreme Court. I made that promise, and we kept it. More Black women to the courts of appeals than every other previous administration in American history combined—combined.

Other historic firsts for Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, Muslim Americans. The list goes on. Look, the point is: For the first time in a long, long time, we have a bench that looks like and represents all of America. All of America.

And a special thank you again to Leader Schumer and Chair Durbin for working tirelessly to move these nominees through the committee and onto the Senate floor in a very—I think it's not an understatement to say—a very contentious political period in American history. [*Laughter*] I—but think about it. One—one-vote majority. I mean, it's amazing what they did.

Other Senators, Democrats and Republicans alike, worked with my administration to fill vacancies in their States.

You know, all these Republican Senators, they were—they weren't sending me Democratic nominees. They were sending me Republican nominees. But we got the—sort of back to the basics, finding basic commitment to civil rights, civil liberties. Whether it was your counterpart in the leader of Republican party, in Kentucky, or wherever, we got people who are people who understand the institutional limitations and safeguards in the Constitution.

I don't want to get anyone in trouble, but this includes some of my conservative friends in Indiana, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Texas. But they're—also got appointed, and they're not Democrats, but they're—understand the institutional structure of the court.

Together, these judges are going to hear cases on issues ruling from everything as whether Americans can cast their ballot. I mean, literally, where they—how they can cast their ballot, when it will be counted. Whether workers can unionize—I thought we settled that in 1934—and make a living wage for their families. Whether children can breathe clean air and drink clean water, and we mandate it by the Congress to do so.

These judges also are a vital check on the excesses of other branches of Government, including Congress and the executive branch when they overreach and run afoul of the constitutional and institutional safeguards.

So let me close with this. I'm proud—proud—of the legacy that we'll leave for our Nation as it relates to judges. And I'm proud of the men and women who stepped forward and heeded the call to serve. I really mean it.

Think about it. If I looked at some of you and said, "I want to nominate you." You said, "In this time?" [*Laughter*] No, I'm serious. Oh, I'm being—I know this room is probably the only room that fully would understand and comprehend that.

And, folks, I know—I know they'll continue to uphold our Nation's founding principles of liberty, justice, equality, and do it for decades to come.

As we say in my old neighborhood, it's a big deal. [*Laughter*] It's a big deal. And I—bless me, Father, for I have sinned.

[At this point, the President made the sign of the cross.]

[*Laughter*] But all kidding aside, I really—I'm really proud of the caliber, capacity, willingness, and the academic backgrounds of all these men and women who we appointed. In fact, we appointed more women than others. That's just because I've—was raised in a household where all the women are smarter than all the men. [*Laughter*]

But all kidding aside, I really think we'll be proud of these women and men that have been appointed. And I think we're going to reestablish the safeguards that were built into the Constitution. Everybody, everybody, everybody has an equal opportunity. That's what it's all about.

So thank you all and all the leaders in this room for all you've done. It wouldn't have gotten it done without you guys. Thanks for the recommendations and all the help. But most importantly, these two guys.

The idea that if—in the beginning, when we had that first conversation, Chuck said, "We're going to appoint all these judges." We looked at each other like, "Are we kidding ourselves?" Right? [*Laughter*] Thank you, pal.

Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

And, Dick—by the way, I've ruined his reputation by bragging so much about him. I—I was hesitant to do it during an election year because it might hurt him. But all kidding aside, every time we get in trouble, I literally ask my staff—I say, "Durbin is there." [*Laughter*] "Durbin is there."

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Richard J. Durbin. Thank you.

The President. You're the best, pal.

Sen. Durbin. Thank you.

The President. You really are. Thank you.

Thank you all so very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:34 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to MSgt. Matthew Livelsberger, USA, suspect in the vehicular explosion in Las Vegas, NV, on January 1; Serena Raquel Murillo, judge, U.S. District Court for the Central District of California; Supreme Court Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson; Joseph A. Laroski, Jr., and Lisa W. Wang, judges, U.S. Court of International Trade; John Z. Lee, judge, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit; and Senate Minority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization.

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Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Durbin, Richard J.; Jackson, Ketanji Brown; Laroski, Joseph A., Jr.; Lee, John Z.; Livelsberger, Matthew; McConnell, A. Mitchell; Murillo, Serena Raquel; Schumer, Charles E.; Wang, Lisa W.

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