

Thank you for coming today. May God bless, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:50 a.m. at the Tri-Cities Regional TN/VA Airport. In his remarks, he referred to gubernatorial can-

didate Van Hilleary and his wife, Meredith; senatorial candidate Lamar Alexander and his wife, Honey; Janice Bowling, candidate for Tennessee's Fourth Congressional District; NASCAR driver Darrell Waltrip; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

## The President's Radio Address *November 2, 2002*

Good morning. The Federal courts play a central role in American justice, protecting the innocent, punishing the guilty, and upholding the rule of law. Yet, our Federal courts today are in crisis. The judicial confirmation process does not work as it should. Nominees are too often mistreated. Votes are delayed. Hearings are denied, and dozens of Federal judgeships sit empty, endangering the quality of justice in America.

Since coming into office, I have sent to the Senate 32 nominees for the Federal courts of appeals. These nominees are men and women with experience, intelligence, character, and bipartisan home-State support. They represent the mainstream of American law and American values. Yet the Senate has confirmed only 14 of these 32 nominees. As of this week, 15 of my appeals court nominees will have been forced to wait over a year for a hearing, which is more than under the previous 9 Presidents combined.

There is no good reason why any nominee should endure a year, a year and a half, or more without the courtesy of an up-or-down floor vote. Whatever the explanation, we clearly have a poisoned atmosphere in which well-qualified nominees are neither voted up nor voted down; they're just left in limbo. If this situation persists and judicial vacancies go unfulfilled, the Federal courts will be unable to act in a timely manner to enforce the criminal laws,

the environmental laws, and the civil right laws that affect the lives of every American.

The judicial crisis is the result of a broken system, and we have a duty to repair it. I want to work with the Senate to fashion a new approach to filling Federal court vacancies, a bipartisan approach that would apply now and in the future. This week, I have offered four proposals to break the logjam in Washington and bring the Federal courts to full strength.

First, I call on Federal judges to notify the President of their intention to retire at least a year in advance, whenever possible. Because the nomination and confirmation of a Federal judge is a lengthy process, judges who retire without advance notice can unintentionally create a judicial vacancy for many months.

Second, I propose that Presidents submit a nomination to the Senate within 180 days of receiving notice of a Federal court vacancy or intended retirement. This will continue but speed up the process of obtaining recommendations and evaluations from home-State Senators and others, while leaving ample time for Presidents to choose nominees of the highest quality.

Third, I called on the Senate Judiciary Committee to commit to holding a hearing within 90 days of receiving a nomination. A firm deadline is the best way to ensure that judicial nominees are promptly considered. And 90 days is more than enough time for the committee to conduct necessary research before holding a hearing,

as Democrat Senators have recognized in the past.

Finally, I called on the full Senate to commit to an up-or-down floor vote on each nominee no later than 180 days after the nomination is submitted. This is a very generous period of time that will allow all Senators to evaluate nominees and have their votes counted.

My proposals are fair to all parties and would apply regardless of who is President or which party controls the Senate.

The current state of affairs is not merely another round of political wrangling. It is a disturbing failure to meet a responsibility under the Constitution, and it is harming

the administration of justice in America. Our country deserves better. The process can work better, and we can make it better. The Constitution has given us a shared duty, and we must meet that duty together.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:52 p.m. on November 1 at the Seelbach Hilton Hotel in Louisville, KY, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 2. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 1 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## Remarks in Atlanta, Georgia November 2, 2002

*The President.* Thank you all very much. Thank you all. Glad I came. So you're probably wondering what Sonny—I mean, what Saxby said. He said, "Keep it short. The Bulldogs are playing."

Really what he was saying is, "It's time to quit the sermons and start passing the plate." That means it's time to turn out the vote. I'm here in the great State of Georgia because I want all the citizens of this State to understand that we have a responsibility, as Americans in a land of freedom, to vote. See, we have a responsibility. If you believe in democracy, if you love freedom, then you have a responsibility to go to the polls next Tuesday. And I'm not talking about just a handful of Georgia citizens; I mean everybody. Republicans and Democrats and people who could care less about political parties need to do their duty.

But when you get inside that box, I've got some suggestions: For the good of Georgia and for the good of the country, Saxby Chambliss needs to be the U.S. Senator. For the good of the 11th, Phil

Gingrey needs to be the U.S. Congressman. And for the good of the schoolchildren of Georgia and the taxpayers of Georgia, Sonny Perdue ought to be the next Governor.

I appreciate Sonny. I appreciate him being straightforward, down to earth, tells it like it is. That's why he's going to be a fine Governor. I appreciate the fact that he set education as a priority. That's why he's going to be a fine Governor. I appreciate the fact that he has actually met a payroll before. *[Laughter]* That's why he's going to be a fine Governor.

No, I appreciate Sonny being here. And I appreciate the members of the mighty Georgia congressional delegation for being here as well, Mac Collins and Johnny Isakson and John Linder and Bob Barr. I appreciate their friendship, and I appreciate their service to our country.

I want to thank all the candidates who are here. I want to thank the grassroots activists who have come. And I want to thank you for accepting the fact that you