

Statement on Senate Passage of Healthy Forests Restoration Legislation
October 30, 2003

I commend the Senate for passing the “Healthy Forests Restoration Act.” The bipartisan support for this commonsense legislation demonstrates that we are united in our goal of returning our Nation’s forests to health by eliminating unnatural overgrowth and promoting early community involvement in forest management planning.

Restoring forest health is important to the safety of our communities and to the protection of wildlife, endangered species, water supplies, and forest resources. I urge the House and Senate to quickly resolve the differences in their bills so that I can sign this important legislation and we can fully implement my Healthy Forests Initiative.

Statement on Senate Action To Block a Vote on the Nomination of Judge Charles W. Pickering, Sr., To Be a United States Court of Appeals Circuit Judge
October 30, 2003

Today a minority of Senators once again blocked an outstanding judicial nominee from receiving an up-or-down vote in the United States Senate. The nomination of Judge Charles Pickering has been languishing in the Senate for over 2 years. He is a good, fair-minded man, and the treatment he has received by a handful of Senators is a disgrace. Judge Pickering was previously confirmed by the Senate and has led a distinguished career, including as a Federal district court judge for over a decade. He has wide bipartisan support from those who know him best.

More than one-third of my nominees for the courts of appeals are still awaiting a vote. The continued obstruction by a willful minority of the Senate is bad for our country, harmful for the provision of justice for all Americans, and damaging to the smooth functioning of our judicial system. It hurts America, and it is wrong.

One year ago today, I proposed a commonsense plan to return fairness and dignity to the judicial confirmation process. This plan, which would apply no matter who is President or which party controls the Senate, included specific proposals to fix the underlying problems that have long undermined the confirmation process. One year later, certain Senators are continuing their obstructionist tactics and are continuing to filibuster fine men and women who would make outstanding appeals court judges.

I again urge the Senate to put aside partisan politics and work to find a solution that will repair the process and ensure that all judicial nominees are treated fairly and that all Americans experience timely justice in our Federal courts. As I have said before, let each Senator vote how he or she thinks best, but give the nominees a vote.