



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 109th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 152

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 2006

No. 34—Book II

Senate

NOMINATION OF STEPHEN G. LARSON TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now consider Executive Calendar No. 548, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Stephen G. Larson, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support for the nomination of Magistrate Judge Stephen Larson to a seat on the Federal District Court for the Central District of California in Riverside, CA.

Judge Larson comes to this nomination with a strong background of public service.

Since October 2000, Judge Larson has served as a magistrate judge for the Central District of California in Riverside. In the 10 years before becoming a magistrate judge, Larson served the public as an assistant U.S. attorney in the Central District of California, where he was chief of the U.S. Attorney Office's Organized Crime Strike Force and coordinator of its Russian Organized Crime Unit.

Judge Larson attended college here in Washington, at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, from which he received a bachelor's of science in 1986. Judge Larson returned to California for law school, graduating from the University of Southern California Law School in 1989.

The American Bar Association has unanimously declared Judge Larson to be "well qualified," the ABA's highest rating.

Judge Larson has the strong support of California's Inland Empire. I have received endorsements of Judge Larson's nomination from a diverse cross-section of the Inland Empire's legal community: from judges and law professors, from government attorneys

and private practitioners, and from Democrats and Republicans.

In these letters, Judge Larson is praised for his "legal knowledge," "fairness," "integrity," "hard work," "temperament," "intelligence," "patience," and "sense of social justice."

Judge Larson was nominated through the bipartisan judicial selection process that we developed in California, a process which I believe is a model for the Nation. Under this system, a committee of lawyers including Democrats and Republicans recommends qualified, non-ideological applicants to the President.

Judge Larson's nomination through this process, along with his impressive record of public service, gives me confidence that he comes to the bench without an agenda and that he will serve the people of California and the Nation with wisdom, integrity, and humility.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I rise in enthusiastic support of the confirmation of Judge Stephen Larson to the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California, one of the Nation's busiest Federal courts, serving seven of Southern California's most populous counties.

Judge Larson is a model of hard work, fairness, moderation and judicial independence. Judge Larson is skilled at bringing all sides together. He is a Republican with broad local, bipartisan support and respect from lawyers, judges and Federal practitioners in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, where he currently serves.

Judge Larson has had a distinguished legal career and a sterling reputation within the California legal community. He was sworn in as magistrate on September 25, 2000. Prior to this position, Judge Larson was a Federal prosecutor and chief of the Organized Crime Section of the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Judge Larson is a nationally known expert in organized and international crime. He was heavily involved in

fighting Russian gangs and helped form the Russian Organized Crime Program in Los Angeles.

Judge Larson earned his undergraduate degree from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service. While at Georgetown, he served as a teaching assistant to former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. He earned his law degree from the University of Southern California in 1989. He worked as an associate at O'Melveny & Myers in Los Angeles until 1991, when he joined the U.S. Attorney's Office.

I congratulate Judge Larson on his confirmation vote. And I look forward to what I hope will be many years of service to the people of California and the Nation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Stephen G. Larson, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California?

The nomination was confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now return to legislative session.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. As a Senator from the State of South Dakota, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SPRINGTIME

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, Monday, March 20, marks the vernal equinox and the first day of spring. On Monday, night and day are equal in length, marking the midpoint of our climb out of the dark winter into the glorious long days of spring.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Lovely, lovely spring. It takes a cold heart indeed not to love the springtime.

Spring is the morning of the year,
And summer is the noontime bright;
The autumn is the evening clear,
That comes before the winter's night.

The Golden Rod, by Frank Dempster Sherman.

Though most of the United States has enjoyed an unseasonable winter with mild temperatures and even thunderstorms in February, it is comforting to see the plants and animals around us heeding the celestial timetable even if the mercury in the thermometer is not. Right on schedule, this year as last year and in all the years before, the crocus and the daffodil burst through the leaf mold and lawn thatch, staining the subdued winter landscape with vibrant color, like Easter eggs hidden in the grass. In time for Saint Patrick's day, the grass put on a deep cloak of Irish green.

Day by day, the skeletal tree limbs and branches are swelling and budding with soft, new leaves whose iconic color can only be named "spring green."

Next week, the Nation's Capital will be celebrating the Cherry Blossom Festival. These lovely trees, a gift from the Government of Japan, delight jaded commuters as well as visitors with the ethereal beauty of their graceful blooms reflected against the dark water of the Potomac River or framing the elegant marble columns of the Jefferson Memorial.

Oh, fair to see
Bloom-laden cherry tree,
Arrayed in sunny white:
An April day's delight,
Oh, fair to see!

Oh, Fair to See by Christina Rossetti.

Deep within the earth, the soil warms, ready for priming for the germination of crop and flower seeds. The ageless cycles of agriculture and horticulture are rumbling into action across West Virginia and the Nation.

The Bible says, "The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, And herbs of the mountains are gathered." I know that I am not alone in appreciating the rhythmic patterns of a freshly plowed field while anticipating the mouthwatering goodness of the crops to come. For 2,000 years and more, mankind has rejoiced in the promise of spring. Even now, home gardeners are sowing early spring crops of peas and starting more tender shoots under lights. Fertilizer and weed killer are in short supply at garden stores, while bedding plants are starting to arrive.

And it is not just the farmers and gardeners among us who revel in the signs of emerging springtime. All of God's creatures feel the pull of the warming sun, the warming of the waters, the melting of the snow and ice. The penciled Vees of Canada geese hew to the seasonal timetable as their formations power their way northward, honking to announce their passing as

they drive to their northern nesting grounds. The dainty goldfinches that mob our winter feeders are changing, too, shedding their drab winter garb for brilliant springtime yellow as they chatter and flit about. As the longer, warmer days advance, more and more birds appear, and the sky fills with their vernal songfest. The poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, famously captured the beauty of birdsong in his poem, "To a Skylark:"

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.
Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the setting sun
O'er which clouds are brightening,
Thou dost float and run
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

Deer, once a common sight along the roadsides and fields in the later afternoon dusk, are retreating into the woods, nibbling new shoots as they seek out hidden coverts in which to secrete their wobbly-legged fawns. The deer's place along the road seems, alas, to have been taken over by amorous skunks seeking their springtime love.

In cities as well as rural areas, the spring shows itself. In the stone flower beds around the Capitol, the tulip bulbs are sending green spears up through the soil as the squirrels race about in an exuberant display of spring energy. The spring sunshine and warmth energize us all. Parks and playgrounds are welcoming young shoots of humankind to play among the swings and slides while contented parents keep watch. Even our dogs affect a more jaunty air as they soak up the fresh scents and nibble on the green shoots of new grass. Later, as the summer heat saps our energy and lawn chores become more tiresome, as the children get sweaty and the dogs pant in the shade, we may long for the dark cold days of winter. But now, in the gentle warmth of spring sunshine, it seems as if our prayers are answered with the blooming of the flowers. Winter is passing, and spring is here. Welcome, welcome spring.

Mr. President, I close with another poem about spring. This one from Robert Frost, one of the 20th century's leading American poets. His poem, "A Prayer in Spring," beautifully captures the ephemeral pleasure of an early spring day with a word of thanks to the Creator of it all.

A PRAYER IN SPRING

Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers today;
And give us not to think so far away
As the uncertain harvest; keep us here
All simply in the springing of the year.

Oh, give us pleasure in the orchard white,
Like nothing else by day, like ghosts by night;

And make us happy in the happy bees,
The swarm dilating round the perfect trees.
And make us happy in the darting bird
That suddenly above the bees is heard,
The meteor that thrusts with needle bill,
And off a blossom in mid-air stands still.
For this is love and nothing else is love,
The which it is reserved for God above
To sanctify to what far ends He will,
But which it only needs that we fulfill.

TRIBUTE TO WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY ON ITS CENTENNIAL YEAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to an outstanding institution of higher learning in my home State, Western Kentucky University. Next Tuesday, March 21, 2006, marks Western's 100th year of fulfilling its mission to "prepare students to be productive citizens of a global society" and to "provide service and lifelong learning opportunities for its constituents."

Located in Bowling Green, KY, Western Kentucky University has not always been known by its current name. On March 21, 1906, the Kentucky General Assembly approved legislation establishing two teacher-training institutions. Bowling Green was selected as one of the sites, and the Western Kentucky State Normal School was established. With a mission to train teachers, the newly created institution selected Henry Hardin Cherry as its first president.

Five years after its founding, the school moved to its current site on "the Hill," a scenic location overlooking the city of Bowling Green. This move would later lend itself to an appropriate school motto that is proudly used today, describing Western Kentucky University as "the home of the Hilltoppers." In 1922, the school was renamed and became known as Western Kentucky State Normal School and Teachers College; at this time, it was also authorized to grant 4-year degrees. In 1924, the first such degrees were earned and awarded.

In the years that followed, Western continued to expand its curriculum and shorten its name. While many "Hilltoppers" have followed the school's early roots and pursued degrees in education, the institution now offers a broader set of degree programs. On June 16, 1966, Western underwent its final name change and became known simply as Western Kentucky University. The university now has an enrollment of over 18,000 students and offers 88 academic majors and 57 academic minors. It also offers 18 associate degrees and graduate studies.

I always enjoy visiting Western and spending time with its students, faculty, and staff. I am proud to have partnered with the university to secure over \$48 million in Federal funding for worthwhile projects such as the Western Mobile Health Unit and the ARS Federal research lab. University president Gary Ransdell, the institution's