

Court concludes its summer session at the end of June. He noted that "it would be in the best interests of the Court to have [his] successor appointed and confirmed well in advance of the commencement of the Court's next Term," and I wholeheartedly agree with Justice Stevens. That is in the best interests of the Court and the country.

Since Justice Stevens' announcement in early April, there has been a good deal of work done in preparation. The President announced his choice a month later, on May 10. During that month, much was written and said about the eventual nominee who was identified from the outset as a leading candidate for nomination. When the President made it official, Senate Republicans were quick to react. Indeed, one Senate Republican announced on the very day that the President announced his selection that the Senator opposed Solicitor General Kagan's nomination and would be voting against confirmation. Extreme right-wing interest groups and commentators have been savaging her since before the nomination was announced, and that has not subsided. The misstatements and harsh characterizations make proceeding sooner rather than later all the more important. Solicitor General Kagan deserves the earliest opportunity to respond to these attacks and to set the record straight. The American people deserve a process that is fair and thorough but not needlessly prolonged. In selecting this hearing date, I am trying to be fair to all concerned.

I also want to conclude the process without unnecessary delay so that Solicitor General Kagan might participate fully in the deliberations of the Supreme Court in selecting cases and preparing for its new term. I want to complete Senate consideration, as Justice Stevens suggested, so that the new Justice is confirmed well in advance of the commencement of the Supreme Court's next term, so that she may organize her chambers, select her clerks, and fully participate in the work of the Court.

This schedule is also in keeping with the time line Senator McConnell recommended in 2005, when President Bush made his first nomination to the Supreme Court and Senator McConnell, then the Republican whip and now the Senate Republican leader, said that the Senate should consider and confirm the President's Supreme Court nomination within 60 to 70 days. We worked hard to achieve that. The final Senate vote on Chief Justice Roberts' nomination was 72 days after he was designated. Justice Sotomayor was likewise confirmed 72 days after she was named. Seventy-two days after the nomination of Elena Kagan will be July 21.

Unlike the late July nomination of John Roberts, this nomination by President Obama was announced on May 10. Unlike the resignation of Jus-

tice O'Connor, which was not announced until July, the retirement of Justice Stevens was made official on April 9. So in this instance the vacancy arose almost 3 months earlier than in 2005. After bipartisan consultation, President Obama made his nomination more than 2 months earlier than President Bush did in 2005.

One of the Republican criticisms of this nomination is that Solicitor General Kagan has not been a judge and does not have years of opinions to be considered. That should make Senators' preparation for the hearing less labor intensive than that for Justice Sotomayor. In addition, we thoroughly reviewed and considered her record just last year when the Senate, by a bipartisan majority vote, confirmed her nomination to serve as the Solicitor General of the United States, often called the "Tenth Justice."

To delay the confirmation hearing until July, as some have suggested, would mean extending the preparation time from 49 to 63 days. But Republicans complain that there is less to review, nothing like the thousands of opinions they complained about last year. Accordingly, we could actually proceed more quickly to the hearing. This last weekend, Republican Senators said that Solicitor General Kagan's answers at the hearing were going to be the key. If that is true and they will approach the hearing with open minds and listen to her answers to their questions, we should not needlessly delay getting to those questions and answers.

The hearing is the opportunity for all Senators on the Judiciary Committee, both Republicans and Democrats, to ask questions, raise concerns, and evaluate the nomination. It seems to me that Republican Senators are ready to ask questions now. At last week's consideration of the nomination of Goodwin Liu to the Ninth Circuit, much of the discussion from Republican Senators seemed, instead, to be about the Kagan nomination to the Supreme Court. The Republican Senators say that they want to ask her about her actions as the dean of Harvard Law School and about her judicial philosophy. It does not take 2 months to prepare to ask those questions. They have already raised them. They will surely be prepared to ask them by late June. This is a schedule that I think is both fair and adequate—fair to the nominee and adequate for us to prepare for the hearing and Senate consideration. There is no reason to indulge in needless and unreasonable delay.

We already have received Solicitor General Kagan's response to the committee's questionnaire. Senator Sessions and I have sent a letter to the National Archives requesting documents related to Elena Kagan's service in the Clinton administration and there should be no cause for concerns that we will have these records before the committee in light of the White House Counsel's request over the week-

end for the release of thousands of pages of records from that time. We will be prepared to proceed to a hearing on June 28, almost 6 weeks from today.

The purpose of the hearing is to allow Senators to ask questions and raise their concerns. It is also the time the American people can see the nominee, consider her thoughtfulness, her temperament, and evaluate her character. I am disappointed that some Republican Senators have already declared that they will vote no on Solicitor General Kagan's nomination and have made that announcement before giving the nominee a fair chance to be heard. It is incumbent on us to allow the nominee an opportunity to be considered fairly and allow her to respond to false criticism of her record and her character. Those who are critical and have doubts should support the promptest possible hearing. That is where questions can be asked and answered. That is why we hold hearings.

President Obama handled the selection process with the care that the American people expect and deserve and met with Senators from both sides of the aisle. I suggested that he nominate someone outside the judicial monastery, whose experiences were not limited to those in the rarified air of the Federal appellate courts. The Supreme Court's decisions have a fundamental impact on Americans' everyday lives. One need look no further than the Lilly Ledbetter and Diana Levine cases to understand how just one vote can determine the Court's decision and impact the lives and freedoms of countless Americans. One need look no further than the Citizens United decision to know that the decisions of the Supreme Court can drown out the voices of individual Americans in favor of wealthy corporate interests. I believe that Solicitor General Kagan understands that our courthouse doors must remain open to hard-working Americans.

President Obama is to be commended for having consulted with Senators from both sides of the aisle. Now the Senate must fulfill its responsibility. The nominee has returned the Judiciary Committee questionnaire and will be completing her meetings with Senators on the Judiciary Committee very soon. I hope that all Senators now will work with me to move forward to consider this nomination in a fair and timely manner.

COMMENDING PRIME MINISTER KOSOR OF CROATIA

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, today I honor Madame Jadranka Kosor, the Prime Minister of Croatia, on the occasion of her visit to Washington, DC. I congratulate her on becoming the first female Prime Minister of Croatia. Additionally, I commend Croatia for its promotion of genuine cooperation in southeast Europe fostering strong relations, stability and prosperity with her

neighbors. As a graduate of the Faculty of Law in Zagreb, Vice Prime Minister, Minister of the Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity, she is a woman of much accomplishment.

Prime Minister Kosor is dedicated to leading Croatia on its final stages of accession toward membership in the European Union. This is an action strongly supported by the United States. I recognize Prime Minister Kosor's efforts and determination in carrying out all the necessary reforms in this process. She has helped to strengthen the rule of law and the economy of her country in order for it to flourish and enter into the European Union.

Croatia is a strong supporter of the United States and its efforts to restore stability and peace to many parts of the world. Croatia is one of the two newest NATO members and a staunch ally of the United States. In Afghanistan Croatia has assisted the United States for years with troops and other ground personnel.

Many years ago my paternal grandfather left Croatia for a new life in America. His son, my father, was the first Croatian American elected to the House of Representatives. I am proud to be the first Croatian American elected to the U.S. Senate. I am honored to meet with Prime Minister Kosor to discuss our nations' mutual support for democracy around the world.

Mr. President and colleagues, please join me in welcoming Prime Minister Kosor to the United States and honoring the friendship our two countries have.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING THE PUJOLS FAMILY FOUNDATION

• Mrs. McCASKILL. Mr. President, today I commemorate the work and commitment of the Pujols Family Foundation. We all know Albert Pujols as one of today's most notable baseball players and, of course, the first baseman for my home team, the St. Louis Cardinals. However, in addition to his commitments as a professional athlete, Albert has chosen to invest his time and compassion for the past 5 years in the Pujols Family Foundation. In its efforts to provide education, medical relief, and supplies to impoverished children, the Pujols Family Foundation has funded Haitian disaster relief, family-oriented events in St. Louis, and mission trips to the Dominican Republic. Through their efforts and service, the Pujols Family Foundation has become a saving grace for families living with Down's syndrome, disabilities, and life-threatening illnesses without means to afford many of the necessities we take for granted.

Albert Pujols also uses baseball as a way to bring new joy and relief to chil-

dren in the Dominican Republic. Batey Baseball is a new joint venture for 2010 and is spearheaded by Albert Pujols, the Pujols Family Foundation, and Compassion International. Its mission is to teach responsibility, teamwork, and leadership to young men in the Dominican Republic through the sport of baseball. Set to launch in the summer of 2010, this program will bring joy and hope to many young baseball enthusiasts in the Dominican Republic.

It is a welcome occurrence when I have the honor to come before this body and acknowledge the selfless and tireless work done by Missourians on behalf of those less fortunate.

On behalf of myself and the people of Missouri, I would like to recognize and congratulate Albert Pujols, his wife Dordre, and the Pujols Family Foundation on their 5 years of service to the people of St. Louis, MO, and the world.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Pate, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations and a withdrawal which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:47 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, without amendment:

S. 1782. An act to provide improvements for the operations of the Federal courts, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 2288. An act to amend Public law 106-392 to maintain annual base funding for the Upper Colorado and San Juan fish recovery programs through fiscal year 2023.

H.R. 4491. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of alternatives for commemorating and interpreting the role of the Buffalo Soldiers in the early years of the National Parks, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4614. An act to amend part E of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to provide for incentive payments under the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program for States to implement minimum and enhanced DNA collection processes.

The message further announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 211. Concurrent resolution recognizing the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the East Bay Regional Park District in California, and for other purposes.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

At 4:02 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bills:

S. 1782. An act to provide improvements for the operations of the Federal courts, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5014. An act to clarify the health care provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs that constitutes minimum essential coverage.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 4491. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of alternatives for commemorating and interpreting the role of the Buffalo Soldiers in the early years of the National Parks, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 4614. An act to amend part E of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to provide for incentive payments under the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program for States to implement minimum and enhanced DNA collection processes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

The following concurrent resolution was read, and referred as indicated:

H. Con. Res. 211. Concurrent resolution recognizing the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the East Bay Regional Park District in California, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and placed on the calendar:

H.R. 2288. An act to amend Public Law 106-392 to maintain annual base funding for the Upper Colorado and San Juan fish recovery programs through fiscal year 2023.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. VITTER:

S. 3384. A bill to direct the General Accountability Office to conduct a full audit of hurricane protection funding and cost estimates associated with post-Katrina hurricane protection; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. BENNETT (for himself, Mr.

BARRASSO, Mr. ENZI, and Mr. HATCH):

S. 3385. A bill to amend the Mineral Leasing Act to require the Secretary of the Interior to determine the impact of any proposed modification to the policy of the Department of the Interior relating to any onshore oil or natural gas preleasing or leasing activity, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. ROCKEFELLER (for himself, Mr. PRYOR, Mr. NELSON of Florida,