

Certified Chess Coach program that provides the coaches involved in the scholastic programs training and ensures schools and students can have confidence in the programs;

Whereas many studies have linked chess programs to the improvement of student scores in reading and math, as well as improved self-esteem;

Whereas the Federation offers a school curriculum to educators to help incorporate chess into the school curriculum;

Whereas chess is a powerful cognitive learning tool that can be used to successfully enhance reading and math concepts; and

Whereas chess engages students of all learning styles and strengths and promotes problem-solving and higher-level thinking skills: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates October 8, 2011, as “National Chess Day”; and

(2) encourages the people of the United States to observe “National Chess Day” with appropriate programs and activities.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations: Calendar Nos. 95, 230, 232, 254, 255, 256, 257, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 275, 277, 278, 279, 280, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 288, and Calendar Nos. 291 through 323, and nominations placed on the Secretary's Desk in the Air Force, Army, Foreign Service, Marine Corps, and Navy; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to any of the nominations; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; and that President Obama be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, for the second year in a row, the Senate has failed to take significant steps before the August recess to address the serious crisis of judicial vacancies on courts around the country. Last August, Senate Republicans left 17 judicial nominations pending and consented to confirm only four Federal circuit and district court nominations before the recess. I noted at that time what a serious blow that was to our ability to make progress addressing the judicial vacancies crisis that had already persisted for well over a year. Today, as the Senate recesses with judicial vacancies still near 90 as they were a year ago, the Senate is doing even worse, confirming only 4 judicial nominations of the 24 nominees already considered by the Judiciary Committee and awaiting a Senate vote.

Last week, I urged the Senate to confirm the two dozen judicial nominations already fully considered by the Judiciary Committee and ready for final action by the Senate. Of them, 20 were unanimously reported, without a single negative vote. Many have been

pending without final action for months. I am, again, disappointed as Senate Republicans continue to delay these much needed and long awaited confirmations.

Even though Federal judicial vacancies have remained near or above 90 for more than 2 years, the Senate's Republican leadership has refused to consent to vote on these qualified, consensus nominations, leaving 16 of the 20 unanimously reported nominees in limbo. This is not the way to make real progress. The American people should not have to wait more weeks and months for the Senate to do its constitutional duty and ensure the ability of our Federal courts to provide justice to Americans around the country.

In the past, we were able to confirm consensus nominees more promptly. They were not forced to languish for months. In the second year of the Bush administration, in 2002, before the August recess the Senate moved ahead to confirm a dozen judicial nominees. The next year, with a Republican Senate majority, Senate Democrats consented to seven confirmations before the August recess. With the delays that have been backlogging confirmations for years now, we have 20 unanimously reported judicial nominees who could all have been confirmed before this recess. Regrettably, 16 will not go forward today because Republicans refuse to consent.

At a time when judicial vacancies remain near 90, these needless delays perpetuate the judicial vacancies crisis that Chief Justice Roberts wrote of last December and that the President, the Attorney General, bar associations, and chief judges around the country have urged us to join together to end. The Senate can and should be doing a better job working to ensure the ability of our Federal courts to provide justice to Americans around the country.

Just last week, the Congressional Research Service released a report that confirms what many of us have been saying for some time: This is the longest sustained period of historically high vacancy rates on the Federal judiciary in the last 35 years.

This is hardly surprising. Republican obstruction kept the total confirmations in the first year of the President's term to the lowest total for a first year in more than 50 years, when only 12 judicial nominees were allowed to be considered. Republican obstruction kept the 2-year total of confirmations to the lowest total in 35 years, for the first 2 years of a President's term, with only a total of 60 Federal circuit and district court nominations confirmed during the course of those entire first 2 years of the Obama administration. Accordingly, judicial vacancies have perpetuated needlessly and caused needless delay on consensus nominees.

We are seeing it, again, this week as we approach the August recess in the third year of the Obama administra-

tion. In the 17 months I chaired the Judiciary Committee during President Bush's first term, the Senate confirmed 100 of his Federal circuit and district court nominees. It looks like it will take twice as long to reach 100 confirmations of President Obama's Federal circuit and district court nominees. President Obama has been in office for 31 months and only 95 of his Federal circuit and district court nominees have been confirmed. There are two dozen more that are stalled, awaiting final Senate action. By the August recess in the third year of the Bush administration, the Senate had confirmed 143 Federal circuit and district court judges. This year, the comparable number is only 95.

It is not accurate to pretend that real progress is being made in these circumstances. Vacancies are being kept high, consensus nominees are being delayed and it is the American people and the Federal courts that are being made to suffer. This is another area in which we must come together for the American people. There is no reason Senators cannot join together to finally bring down the excessive number of vacancies that have persisted on Federal courts throughout the Nation for far too long.

I have always taken seriously the responsibility of the Senate to make sure that the Federal judiciary has the resources it needs. Senate Republicans had pocket-filibustered more than 60 of President Clinton's judicial nominations and refused to proceed on them while judicial vacancies skyrocketed to more than 110. Despite that, in the 17 months I chaired the Judiciary Committee during President Bush's first 2 years in office, the Senate proceeded to confirm 100 of his judicial nominees; during the next 24 months, with a Republican majority in the Senate, confirmed 105 more, for a total of 205 confirmed judges during President Bush's first term. We have a long way to go for the Senate to be as productive as we were during President Bush's first term.

We were able to lower vacancies dramatically during President Bush's years in office, cutting them in half during his first term. The Senate has reversed course during the Obama administration, and with Republican objections slowing the pace of confirmations, judicial vacancies have been at crisis levels for over 2 years. Over the 8 years of the Bush administration, from 2001 to 2009, we reduced judicial vacancies from 110 to a low of 34. They now stand at 88 vacancies. The vacancy rate—which we reduced from 10 percent to 6 percent by this date in President Bush's third year, and ultimately to less than 4 percent in 2008—is back above 10 percent.

Time and time again over the last 2½ years, I have urged the Senate to come together and work to address this crisis. At the beginning of this year, I called for a return to regular order in the consideration of nominations. We

have seen that approach work on the Judiciary Committee. I have thanked the Judiciary Committee's ranking member, Senator GRASSLEY, many times for his cooperation with me to make sure that the committee continues to make progress in the consideration of nominations. His approach has been the right approach. Regrettably, it has not been matched on the floor, where the refusal by Republican leadership to come to regular time agreements to consider nominations has put our progress—our positive action—at risk.

Republican obstruction has led to a backlog of two dozen judicial nominations pending on the Senate's Executive Calendar. More than half of the judicial nominations on the calendar would fill judicial emergency vacancies. Yet, due to Republican objections, we have lost another opportunity to make progress by confirming consensus nominations.

Before the Memorial Day recess, I urged that the Senate to take up and vote on the many consensus judicial nominations then on the calendar and ready for final action. But Republican Senators would not agree to consider a single one. With nearly 20 judicial nominees available to the Senate for final action, only 1 was considered before the July 4 recess. In fact, the Senate has now considered only 11 nominations in the last 10 weeks and has only confirmed a total of 18 judicial nominees who had their hearings this year.

Senate Republicans have departed from the Senate's traditional practice by refusing to confirm even unanimous, consensus nominees. I still await an explanation from the other side of the aisle why these nominations could not be considered and confirmed. Republican leadership should explain to the people and Senators from Tennessee, South Carolina, Florida, Texas, Missouri, Louisiana, Maine, New York, Arkansas, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania why there continue to be vacancies on the Federal courts in their States that could easily be filled if the Senate would do its constitutional duty and vote on the President's nominations. These judicial nominees have the support of Republican home State Senators. In fact, there are multiple nominees still pending from Louisiana and Pennsylvania. Yet those nominees still wait for months on the Senate's calendar without explanation for the damaging delays, leaving the people of those States to bear the brunt of having too few judges.

All 24 of the judicial nominations on the calendar have been favorably reported by the Judiciary after a fair but thorough process. We review extensive background material on each nominee. All Senators on the committee, Democratic and Republican, have the opportunity to ask the nominees questions at a live hearing. Senators also have the opportunity to ask questions in writing following the hearing and to meet with the nominees. All of these

nominees have a strong commitment to the rule of law and a demonstrated faithfulness to the Constitution. They should not be delayed for weeks and months needlessly after being so thoroughly and fairly considered by the Judiciary Committee.

Last week, the president of the American Bar Association, Stephen Zack, wrote to the Senate leaders "to urge [them] to redouble [their] efforts to fill existing judicial vacancies promptly so that the federal courts will have the judges they need to uphold the rule of law and deliver timely justice." He wrote:

As lawyers who practice in federal courts across this nation, ABA members know firsthand that long-standing vacancies on courts with staggering caseloads impede access to the courts and create strains that will inevitably reduce the quality of our justice system and erode public confidence in the ability of the courts to vindicate constitutional rights or render fair and timely decisions.

Mr. Zack's concerns echo those of Chief Justice Roberts, the President, the Attorney General, bar associations, and chief judges around the country who have also urged us to join together to end the judicial vacancies crisis. The Senate can and should be doing a better job working to ensure the ability of our Federal courts to provide justice to Americans around the country.

The four nominees the Senate will consider today like so many others left on the calendar have the strong support of their home State Senators—Republicans and Democrats—and all were reported unanimously by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Kathleen Williams was first nominated over a year ago to fill a judicial emergency vacancy in the Southern District of Florida. Her nomination has the support of both of her home State Senators—Senator BILL NELSON, a Democrat, and Senator RUBIO, a Republican—and was reported without objection by the Judiciary Committee on May 12. Ms. Williams has been the Federal public defender for the Southern District of Florida for 15 years, having been appointed five times by the Eleventh Circuit, most recently earlier this year. Ms. Williams was previously a Federal prosecutor in the Southern District of Florida, and she also worked in private civil litigation. Her balance of experience as a prosecutor and as a public defender providing legal services to thousands of defendants who cannot afford their own attorney will serve her well on the Federal bench.

Sara Darrow was nominated over 8 months ago to fill a judicial vacancy in the Central District of Illinois. Ms. Darrow has the bipartisan support of her home State Senators, Senator DURBIN, a Democrat, and Senator KIRK, a Republican. Ms. Darrow has been a prosecutor for over 12 years, working as a State's Attorney for Illinois and later as a Federal prosecutor in Illinois and Iowa. She is currently chief of the violent crimes unit in the U.S. Attor-

ney's Office for the Central District of Illinois. Her nomination was reported by the Judiciary Committee without objection on May 12.

Nelva Gonzales Ramos was nominated in January of this year to fill a judicial emergency vacancy in the Southern District of Texas. Her nomination has the strong support of both her Republican home State Senators, Senators CORNYN and HUTCHISON, and was reported by the Judiciary Committee without objection May 12. She has served for over 12 years as a State judge in Texas, where she has presided over more than 1,200 cases. Judge Ramos has been reelected twice by the people of Texas to serve as a State judge. Prior to joining the bench, she also had a successful career as a litigator in private practice.

Richard Brooke Jackson was first nominated over 10 months ago to fill a judicial emergency vacancy in the District of Colorado. He is currently the chief judge for the First Judicial District in Colorado, where he has served for over 13 years, earning recognitions as the "Best State Judge in Colorado" in 2010. Prior to joining the bench, Judge Jackson practiced law for 26 years in Denver, CO, where he was made a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers. Judge Jackson's nomination has the strong support of both of his home State Senators, Senator UDALL and Senator BENNET, and was reported by the Judiciary Committee without objection on May 12.

The Senate's failure to take action and vote on 20 of the 24 judicial nominees reviewed by the Judiciary Committee and reported favorably to the Senate is yet another in a long line of missed opportunities to come together for the American people. This is not how the Senate has acted in years past with other Presidents' judicial nominees. Vacancies are being kept high, consensus nominees are being delayed, and it is the American people and the Federal courts that are being made to suffer.

I hope that when we return from the August recess, Senators can finally join together to begin to bring down the excessive number of vacancies that have persisted on Federal courts throughout the Nation for far too long. We can and must do better.

I ask unanimous consent that a recent letter from the President of the American Bar Association and a recent column by Professor Carl Tobias be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION,
Chicago, IL, July 28, 2011.

Hon. HARRY REID,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER REID AND MINORITY LEADER MCCONNELL: On behalf of the

American Bar Association, I am writing to urge you to redouble your efforts to fill existing judicial vacancies promptly so that the federal courts will have the judges they need to uphold the rule of law and deliver timely justice.

There is no priority higher to the Association than to assure that we have a fully staffed and fully operating federal bench. That is why I have used my position as ABA president this past year to speak out repeatedly about the urgent need to fill existing vacancies.

We commend the Congress for starting the session by instituting procedural changes and approaching the confirmation process with a fresh sense of urgency, which has helped restore regular order to the process. As a result, the President has made 87 judicial nominations and the Senate has regularly scheduled up-or-down votes and confirmed 31 nominees this session.

However, no significant reduction in the high number of vacancies has been achieved: there are only 4 fewer vacancies on the federal bench today than there were January 1 of this year, and 10 percent of the authorized judgeships remain vacant. During the past two years—since August 2009—the vacancy rate has fluctuated, but it has never dropped below 10 percent.

Thirty-eight of the present vacancies have existed for so long and created such untenable workloads for the remaining judges on the courts that the seats have been declared judicial emergencies by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. As lawyers who practice in federal courts across this nation, ABA members know firsthand that longstanding vacancies on courts with staggering caseloads impede access to the courts and create strains that will inevitably reduce the quality of our justice system and erode public confidence in the ability of the courts to vindicate constitutional rights or render fair and timely decisions. In Arizona, for example, the Speedy Trial Act has been temporarily waived, and criminal defendants wait up to 6 months for a trial, while businesses and individuals wait up to 2 years before their cases are heard.

We realize that the aging of our federal judiciary has contributed to the growing vacancy crisis. In July alone, 10 new vacancies were created through death, retirement and elevation, and we already know that an additional 11 vacancies will arise before the end of this year solely as a result of planned retirements. According to Department of Justice estimates, 60 new vacancies will be created through attrition each year for the next decade. Obviously, progress toward reducing vacancies requires a confirmation rate that outpaces the attrition rate; at present, it is barely keeping abreast of it.

The inescapable conclusion is that despite good intentions and modest progress, the current pace of nominations and confirmations is inadequate to the job. To achieve a significant and lasting reduction in the vacancy rate, both the Administration and the Senate need to engage in a concerted and sustained effort to expedite the process; there is an obvious starting point.

We believe the positions of both Senator Leahy and Senator Grassley with regard to the pending consensus nominees provide useful guidance: Senator Leahy has long urged swift action and up-or-down votes on all consensus nominees, and Senator Grassley, recently attesting to Republican “cooperation and positive action,” observed, “We are moving forward on the consensus nominees.”

At present there is a backlog of 24 nominees awaiting a floor vote, 20 of whom were reported out of the Senate Judiciary Committee on voice vote with no recorded opposition. We urge you as Majority and Minor-

ity Leaders to schedule immediate up-or-down votes on these 20 consensus nominees before the Senate adjourns for the upcoming August recess.

Swift confirmation of these nominees would provide immediate relief to some of the most overburdened courts and would lower the vacancy rate to approximately 8 percent. Longterm permanent progress, however, will require more than this one-time fix. To effect lasting change, we also continue to urge the President and members of the Senate to act with common purpose to fill judicial vacancies promptly throughout this Congress so that the federal courts will not be deprived of the judges they need to do their important work.

Sincerely,

STEPHEN N. ZACK.

[From FindLaw, Aug. 1, 2011]

CONFIRMING CIRCUIT JUDGES IN THE 112TH
SENATE

(By Carl Tobias)

When President Barack Obama was inaugurated, the United States Courts of Appeals experienced vacancies in fourteen of the 179 judgeships. Thus, it was critical that the administration promptly fill those openings. The White House has instituted many practices to facilitate appointments. However, numerous seats remain vacant and more have opened, as judges have retired or assumed senior status, so the total is presently nineteen. A trenchant example is the August 2009 Sixth Circuit nomination of Nashville practitioner Jane Branstetter Stranch. Because the empty appellate seats undermine the judiciary's expeditious, economical and fair disposition of appeals and Ms. Stranch had waited thirteen months for a floor vote, the Senate ultimately approved her last September. Now that the 112th Senate has concluded its first seven months and Obama has proffered nominees for ten of the appeals court openings, he must swiftly nominate excellent candidates for the remaining vacancies, while the upper chamber must expeditiously confirm the appellate nominees. Indeed, Senator Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), the Minority Leader, should agree on a floor debate and vote for Sixth Circuit nominee Bernice Donald before the August recess because she is a well qualified, uncontroversial District Judge whom Obama nominated last December 1.

There are a few reasons for the empty judgeships. For instance, President George W. Bush ineffectively attempted to fill Sixth Circuit openings. He rarely consulted with senators from jurisdictions with vacancies or tapped consensus picks. Two Michigan Sixth Circuit posts lacked judges for a decade and were only filled when the parties reached a 2008 compromise.

Obama has invoked several measures to promptly fill all the current openings. He rapidly consulted home-state elected officials before actual nominations. Most officers have cooperated with the White House and promptly suggested candidates who are very smart, ethical, independent and diligent and have balanced temperament. The White House specifically consulted Tennessee Republican Senators Lamar Alexander and Bob Corker, who agreed to support Ms. Stranch. The President nominated the lawyer in August 2009, while the Judiciary Committee afforded her an October hearing at which the Tennessee senators appeared and voiced their support. The committee reported Stranch on a 15-4 vote in November 2009. The nominee then languished on the Senate floor for ten months.

Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), the Judiciary Committee Chair, worked on securing Ms. Stranch's Senate floor consideration.

For instance, Leahy cooperated with Senator Alexander in requesting that Senator McConnell work with Senator Harry Reid (D-Nev.), the Majority Leader, to swiftly arrange the nominee's debate and vote. On July 20, 2010, Senators Leahy and Alexander worked together on the floor. Leahy lauded Ms. Stranch's capabilities, emphasized her protracted wait and sought unanimous consent to consider the nominee. Senator Alexander agreed that “Jane Stranch is a well-qualified nominee [and] is the longest pending circuit court nominee” and asked for a prompt vote. Senator McConnell stated that some Republicans voted against Ms. Stranch in committee and that he would attempt to have the Senate act on her soon. One week later, President Obama asked that McConnell cooperate in filling the “vacancies that continue to plague the judiciary” and seemingly alluded to Ms. Stranch when he observed that nominees have been “waiting up to eight months to be confirmed.”

Obama meticulously picked Stranch as his first nominee for the Sixth Circuit, which includes Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee, because she had assembled a stellar record as a Nashville attorney over three decades. The nominee earned the highest ABA ranking of well qualified from a minority of its committee and a rating of qualified from a substantial majority. Notwithstanding Stranch's excellent background, the chamber failed to hold her floor debate and vote before the Senate recessed last August. However, the chamber agreed to schedule a vote the day that the Senate returned. After brief debate, senators finally approved Stranch 71-21.

Openings in more than ten percent of the federal appellate judgeships show that President Obama must expeditiously proffer nominees for all nineteen vacancies and the Senate ought to swiftly confirm them. Jane Branstetter Stranch's experience demonstrates that there is no reason for delay. Senator McConnell must specifically agree to a floor vote for Judge Donald prior to the August recess because she has been waiting eight months. Quickly filling the empty posts is essential because the courts need all of their judges to deliver justice.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today the Senate will confirm four nominees to be U.S. district judge. Three of these seats, the vacancy for the Southern District of Texas, the vacancy for the Southern District of Florida and the vacancy for the District of Colorado, have been designated as judicial emergencies. With the votes today, we will have confirmed 33 article III judicial nominees. Twenty-one of those confirmed have been for judicial emergencies.

We continue to make great progress in processing President Obama's judicial nominees. As we head into our August recess, the Senate has confirmed 62 percent of President Obama's nominees since the beginning of his Presidency. That is not including the two the Supreme Court Justices nominated by President Obama. As my colleagues are aware, those nominations consumed a considerable amount of time in the committee and on the Senate floor.

During this Congress, the Judiciary Committee has held hearings on more than 75 percent of the President's judicial nominees. During the comparable time period for President Bush, only 70 percent of President Bush's nominees

had hearings by this time. We have also reported 61 percent of the judicial nominees, which is comparable to President Bush's nominees.

I support these nominations and congratulate each of them. I would like to say a few words about each one of the nominees.

Sara Lynn Darrow is nominated to be U.S. district judge for the Central District of Illinois. Ms. Darrow graduated from Marquette University in 1992 and received her J.D. degree from St. Louis University School of Law in 1997. From 1997 to 1998, Mrs. Darrow worked in the law offices of Clarence Darrow, a small general practice firm in Rock Island, IL. She became an assistant State's attorney in 1999, where she handled juvenile, misdemeanor, and felony traffic cases. Upon promotion in 2000, she handled felony cases and serious juvenile abuse cases. In 2003, Mrs. Darrow began work as an assistant U.S. attorney, prosecuting Federal crimes including drug conspiracy, gun, racketeering, child exploitation, fraud, and bankruptcy. She has prosecuted approximately 300 defendants and tried 10 cases to verdict before a jury.

The ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary has given Ms. Darrow a unanimous "Qualified" rating.

Nelva Gonzales Ramos is nominated to be U.S. district judge for the Southern District of Texas. After graduation from the University of Texas School of Law in 1991, Judge Ramos began her career as an attorney at Meredith & Donnelly in Corpus Christi. She worked primarily in personal injury litigation, employment litigation, and insurance defense. In 1997, she resigned from the firm to enter duty as a municipal court judge. During her campaign for district court judge during 1999 to 2000, she briefly worked as a solo practitioner. During this time, she practiced primarily personal injury but also family and criminal law. While in private practice, she tried approximately 17 cases to judgment or verdict.

Judge Ramos was appointed as a municipal court judge for Corpus Christi in 1997 where she had a criminal docket. She presided over 500 cases that went to verdict or judgment. When she announced her candidacy for district court judge in 1999, she resigned from this position as required by the city charter. In 2001 she was elected as district court judge for the 347th Judicial District. She was reelected in 2004 and in 2008. As district court judge, she has presided over 1,200 cases that went to verdict or judgment. While serving as a district court judge she helped establish a domestic violence court, and served as the local administrative judge for the Nueces County district courts. In this capacity she presided over meetings of the district court judges, ensured compliance with local rules, appointed committees regarding court management, and handled assorted other administrative tasks regarding the court.

The ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary gave her a split rating of "Qualified"—substantial majority—and "Well Qualified"—minority.

Kathleen M. Williams is nominated to be U.S. district judge for the Southern District of Florida. She received her B.A. in 1978 and her J.D. in 1982 from the University of Miami School of Law. Ms. Williams began her legal career in 1982 as an associate attorney at Fowler, White, Burnett, Hurley, Banick & Strickroot. At Fowler White, she participated in insurance defense litigation defending insurance companies, city and county interests, hospital trusts and corporations.

From 1984 to 1988, Ms. Williams served as an assistant U.S. attorney in the Southern District of Florida. While an assistant U.S. attorney, she prosecuted individuals on charges ranging from simple narcotics and weapons matters to complex money-laundering and RICO Litigation. In 1988, Ms. Williams returned to the private sector as an associate attorney for Morgan, Lewis & Bockius. While at Morgan, Lewis, & Bockius, she represented financial institutions, government contractors, and multinational corporations in labor litigation and white collar criminal defense matters.

In 1990, Ms. Williams joined the Federal Public Defender's office as the chief assistant public defender, where she represented persons accused of violating Federal criminal statutes but who cannot afford to retain an attorney. In 1995, she was appointed to be the public defender for the Southern District of Florida, where she continues to serve. As a Federal public defender she has litigated a wide range of matters including immigration, complex fraud, and national security. She was also appointed to be the acting Federal public defender for the Middle District of Florida from 1999 to 2000.

The ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary has given her the rating of majority "Well Qualified" and Minority "Qualified."

Richard Brooke Jackson is nominated to be U.S. district judge for the District of Colorado. Judge Jackson received his A.B., magna cum laude, from Dartmouth College in 1969 and his J.D., cum laude, from Harvard Law School in 1972. Following law school, Judge Jackson joined the firm of Holland & Hart as an associate, where he focused on a combination of commercial litigation and personal injury litigation. In 1978, he became a partner and opened the Washington, DC, office of the firm. Additionally, he served on a number of committees within the firm and was chairperson of the litigation department. His pro bono work focused on personal injury claims and occasional representation in criminal defense and family law matters.

In 1998, he was appointed to serve as district judge for the First Judicial District of Colorado. As a district judge, he handled a mixed docket of criminal, civil, and domestic relations

cases. In 2003, he was appointed chief judge.

The ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary has given Judge Jackson the rating of unanimous "Well Qualified."

NOMINATION OF SARA DARROW

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of the nomination of Sara Darrow to serve as a district court judge for the Central District of Illinois.

Sara Darrow is a superb nominee, and she will make an excellent addition to the Federal bench.

Her nomination is not controversial. She had her hearing before the Judiciary Committee in April and was reported out of the committee by unanimous voice vote on May 12.

Sara Darrow's name was recommended to me by a bipartisan merit selection committee that I established to consider applicants for judicial vacancies.

I was proud to recommend her name to the President last year, and I was pleased to see the President nominate her to fill the Central District judgeship that was vacated when Judge Joe Billy McDade took senior status last year.

I want to thank Chairman PAT LEAHY of the Judiciary Committee for moving Ms. Darrow's nomination through the committee. I also want to thank Senator MARK KIRK for his support of this nomination.

Once the Senate confirms Sara Darrow, we will finally have a full complement of judges for the Central District of Illinois. Last year there was only one judge in this district—Chief Judge Mike McCuskey—and three judgeships were vacant.

These vacancies left the Central District in a dire situation. Cases were grinding to a halt, and Judge McCuskey had to drive all across the State to try to keep the dockets moving.

Fortunately, earlier this year the Senate confirmed Judge Jim Shadid and Judge Sue Myerscough to serve in the Central District. They are serving on the bench now.

And with Sara Darrow on the bench as well, the Central District will finally be operating at full strength. That is good news for the people who live in the 46 Illinois counties that make up the Central District.

Sara Darrow has a distinguished record, including her service as a prosecutor both at the State and Federal level.

She currently serves as an assistant U.S. attorney in the Illinois Central District, where she has worked since 2003. She works out of the Rock Island branch of the U.S. Attorney's Office.

She has investigated and prosecuted hundreds of defendants for various Federal crimes including gang offenses, drug conspiracies, gun crimes, bank robbery, money laundering, and fraud. She has also written and argued numerous appeals.