

it comes to maintaining the integrity of our Federal judiciary.

What I heard from the Senate Republican leader was a statement that he would vote against the nomination of Patricia Ann Millett, President Obama's nominee for the vacancy on the court.

There are 11 judges authorized for this court. Currently, only eight are serving. There are three vacancies. Ms. Millett is being suggested for the ninth seat out of the 11 that are authorized. I am not going to go back into the history of our exchanges when it comes to the appointment of judges. I can make as compelling a case, if not more compelling, than that just made by the Senator from Kentucky.

At the end of the day those who are witnessing this will say it is another he said versus he said. What are these politicians up to? Who is right? Who is wrong? What I would suggest is, don't take my word for it and don't take the word of the Senator from Kentucky. Take the word of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

On April 5 the Judicial Conference of the United States, led by Chief Justice John Roberts, made its Federal judgeship recommendations for this Congress. The Judicial Conference is not Republican or Democratic; it is non-partisan. According to its letter, its recommendations reflect the judgeship needs of the Federal judiciary. The Judicial Conference, which judges the caseload and workload in the Federal courts, did not reach the same conclusion as the Senator from Kentucky. They didn't tell us we need fewer judges on the DC Circuit Court—not at all. It is incumbent upon us to fill those vacancies, and that is where we should be today.

Let me add one additional note. What is especially troubling about what they are going to do to this fine woman is the fact that she is so extraordinarily well qualified. She may hold a record of having been an advocate and argued before the U.S. Supreme Court some 32 times. She has received the endorsement of both Democratic and Republican Solicitors General. Those are the lawyers who represent the United States of America before that Court across the street, and her nomination is strongly supported by prominent former Republican Solicitors General.

So the notion that the Senator from Kentucky suggests—that this is some partisan gambit—is completely destroyed by her letters of recommendation from Republicans as well as Democrats who have served as Solicitor General and have witnessed her fine work. This is about putting the right person in the job on one of the most important courts in the land, and sadly, unless the position of the minority leader of the Senate is not the position of all Republican Senators, she may suffer from this partisan approach to the appointment of this vacancy. What a sad outcome for a fine woman who has done so

well as a professional advocate before appellate courts, has been recommended on a bipartisan basis—the highest recommendations—and now, after languishing on the calendar, is going to be dismissed. She didn't fit into the political game plan. That is awful.

The men and women who step forward and submit their applications to become part of our Federal judiciary know they are going to be carefully scrutinized and criticized for some things in their past, but they do it anyway in the name of public service. What I hear from the Senator from Kentucky is that she doesn't fit into the political game plan on the other side of the aisle. I hope there are enough Republican Senators who will disagree with the Senator from Kentucky. We should give Patricia Ann Millett an opportunity to serve on the DC Circuit Court as quickly as possible.

I know there are others on the floor, and I want to make sure everyone has time to say what is on their mind today because there are important issues before us, but I do want to make one brief comment about another issue.

EXPIRATION OF STIMULUS FUNDS FOR SNAP

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, 2 days ago Kate Maehr of the Greater Chicago Food Depository came to visit me in my office. Kate is one of my favorite people. Kate runs this huge network of food distribution in the Chicagoland area. Her warehouses are huge, and they are filled with foodstuffs, much of which is donated by companies that produce food so that it can be distributed in food pantries and other sources all around the Chicagoland area. Kate is one of the best, and I look forward to her visits each year because I know the fine work she does to feed the hungry.

Two days ago she came into my office very sad.

She said: I don't know what we are going to do.

I said: What is the matter?

She said: This Friday the increase in food stamps, or SNAP benefits, for the poor people who live in the greater Chicagoland area is going to be cut. It may be only \$10 or \$15, but I know these people, I know many of them personally, and they live so close to the edge. It will call for some sacrifice on their part, and many of them will be hard-pressed to make that sacrifice, and I can't make up the difference. With all of the donations and all of the charitable contributions, I just can't make up the difference.

I thought about it for a minute. I thought, how would you approach a Member of the Senate or the House of Representatives and say: You know, this cutback of \$15 a month will really hurt. It is hard for us, in our positions in life, to really understand or identify with the plight and the struggle of those who are not certain where their next meal is coming from.

Most of those people have the benefit of the SNAP program, the food stamp

program. Well, who are these people? Who are these 48 million Americans who receive benefits from this program? Almost 1 million of them are veterans. Veterans who are not sure where their next meal is coming from get food stamps—SNAP benefits. Almost half of the 48 million are children. There are 22 million children and another 9 million who are elderly and disabled. When we talk about cuts in the SNAP program, we are talking about these people—the veterans, children, the elderly, and the disabled.

Right now there are two proposals before us. One proposal is from the Senate, and that cuts back spending on this program to the tune of \$4 billion over 10 years. I supported it because I think it closes the potential for abuse. I don't want to waste a penny of Federal taxpayers' money on any program in any way, shape, or form. Senator STABENOW, chairman of the Senate agriculture committee, made this change in the food stamp program that will save us \$4 billion and will not create hardship. In fact, it closes what may be a loophole.

Now comes the House of Representatives, and their view is much different. They want to cut some \$40 billion—10 times as much—over the next 10 years. When we take a look at the approach they are using for these cuts—10 times the amount cut by the Senate—we understand how they get their so-called savings. They take almost 4 million—3.8 million—people out of the program: children, single mothers, unemployed veterans, and Americans who get temporary help from the food stamp program. The House would cut \$19 billion and 1.7 million people from SNAP by eliminating the authority of Governors of both political parties to ask for waivers so that low-income childless adults under 50 can still receive benefits beyond the 3 months they do ordinarily. This says that Governors looking at their States with high unemployment understand that there are people in need.

It is hard for Members of Congress in the House or the Senate—it is hard for me too—to really appreciate the lifestyle of someone living from paycheck to paycheck, but that is a reality for millions of Americans. Many of the people who are receiving food stamps are working. That may come as a shock to people, but they are not making enough money to feed their families.

I went on a tour of a food warehouse in Champaign, IL, and had a number of people explain the importance of not only their work with food pantries but the importance of the food stamp program. I noticed one young woman who was part of the tour. I didn't quite understand why she was there. She was an attractive young mother who was dressed well. She explained that she had two children. I later learned why she was there. She is a food stamp recipient. She has a part-time job with the local school district—not a full-

time job—and her income is so low, she still qualifies for food stamps, SNAP benefits. She was there to thank me. She wanted to thank me not just for the food stamp program but because we changed the law a couple of years ago and allow mothers like her to take their kids to farmers markets and use their food stamps to buy fresh produce.

She said: It is almost like a trip to Disneyland for my kids. They have come to know the farmers, and they look forward to meeting them each week. The farmers give them an extra apple or tomato or this or that, and I just want to thank you. My kids are getting good food from farmers markets, and it helps us make ends meet.

This is a single working mom with two kids. Those are the types of people who are receiving food stamps and benefits. The notion that they are somehow lazy welfare queens—go out and meet them. Meet the woman at the Irving Park United Methodist Church food pantry I met who is trying to live in the city of Chicago on a Social Security check that pays her \$800 a month. I challenge any Member in the Senate or House to try to get by on \$800 a month in the city of Chicago. She makes it because she has two food pantries that give her 3 or 4 days of food each and she has food stamps.

I will conclude by saying that what we are talking about as far as food stamps is really a matter of basic hunger of children, veterans, elderly, and disabled who get this helping hand that makes a difference in their lives.

We are a great and caring nation. I am so proud to represent a great State in that Nation. We are a caring people, and caring people do not turn their backs on hungry kids or hungry elderly people. We better take care, when it comes to this food stamp program, that we don't make cuts that are going to make their lives more difficult.

Finally, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all speakers on the Democratic side prior to noon be limited to 5 minutes each.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I don't know whether Senator BOXER was to be recognized.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I will take 5 minutes.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I understand that Senator BOXER wants 5 minutes, and I will yield to the fine chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee for 5 minutes.

I ask unanimous consent that Senators on the Republican side be allocated 10 minutes each.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I thank the ranking member on the Budget Committee. I know he has a lot on his plate. He and I work well together, and I thank him.

Mr. President, I want to put on the RECORD my strong support for Con-

gressman MEL WATT to be Director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency. May I do that.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. BOXER. I hope we have a resounding vote for MEL WATT. He is a terrific person. He has the heart, intelligence, and the experience.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, as critical decisions are being made about the future of the housing finance system, it is time that we place permanent leadership at the head of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, FHFA. Congressman MEL WATT has both the experience and the expertise to help create a system that ensures access to safe and affordable credit and other housing options for all Americans.

Congressman WATT brings with him over 40 years of experience in housing, real estate, and other financial services issues. From 1970 to 1992, he ran a law practice focusing on business, real estate, municipal bonds, and community development, learning the details of housing finance from the ground level. He was first elected to represent the 12th district of North Carolina in 1992 and has served over 20 years on the House Financial Services Committee. In addition, his work on the House Subcommittees on Capital Markets and Government Sponsored Enterprises, and on Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit has given him the necessary policy expertise to run the agency that oversees Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

Congressman WATT's experience and expertise made him one of the first policymakers to recognize how predatory underwriting practices were threatening the larger housing market and economy as a whole. Years before the foreclosure crisis began, Congressman WATT, along with Congressman Brad Miller, introduced the Prohibit Predatory Lending Act in 2004. They reintroduced it every Congress after that until it was adopted as part of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. In March 2007, only 2 months after the Democrats became the majority party in Congress, Congressman WATT joined Chairman Barney Frank in introducing a bill to reform regulation of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. The bill passed both the House and the Senate with bipartisan support and now called the Housing and Economic Recovery Act, HERA, was signed into law by President Bush in July 2008.

Congressman WATT also brings with him the experience and balance in vision to represent all stakeholders fairly, and has broad support from both industry and consumer groups.

"The National Association of Realtors has long appreciated Representative WATT's proven ability and willingness to engage the industry, stakeholders, and consumers throughout his service in the House of Representatives. WATT has always aimed to craft

policy that is fair, garners wide consensus, and allows all parties to move forward, all of which are vital qualities for the Director of the FHFA."

The Mortgage Bankers of America said, "Congressman WATT would bring considerable experience to the post of Director [and] a strong base of understanding on a wide variety of public policy issues related to housing finance. . . . [W]e would urge the Senate to approve his nomination."

The Center for Responsible Lending said, "WATT brings to FHFA an ability to work with a variety of stakeholders, with many competing interests and perspectives. He has a track record of crafting practical solutions and alliances for a complex, dynamic marketplace. He is consistently thoughtful, fair, and respectful of all opinions, and his policies have been guided by a concern for all Americans."

The National Association of Home Builders said, "We applaud the nomination of Representative WATT to this important position. After four years in conservatorship, the future of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac stands at a crossroad. Rep. WATT brings years of experience to this position at a pivotal moment as our nation's housing market recovers. NAHB looks forward to working closely with Rep. WATT to help address the many complex challenges facing the U.S. housing finance system upon his confirmation by the U.S. Senate."

The Center for American Progress said, "We believe that Mr. WATT has the vision, expertise, and experience necessary to provide strong leadership for FHFA. His personal background and professional experience have provided him with a deep commitment to affordable housing and sustainable credit, which not only support a robust housing market, but also provide shelter and opportunity for America's families and spur economic growth for the nation as a whole."

The United States Conference of Mayors said, "It is not surprising that Representative WATT has bipartisan support in the Senate. His record shows that he can work across the political aisle finding solutions to complex problems. Time and time again, mayors have been impressed with his thoughtful approach in developing solutions that are mindful of all stakeholders. As the nation's housing market climbs back as a major part of our economy, we need such a leader as Mel WATT at the head of FHFA."

Mr. President, I ask to speak as in morning business for the rest of my time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am so pleased to be on the floor with some very good news out of California and how ObamaCare, the Affordable Care Act, is working in our great State. People are phoning. People are going