

helping to break down racial barriers in this country. It is fitting that today the Senate is turning to a confirmation vote that will increase racial diversity on our Federal bench. Justice Wilhelmina Wright is nominated to a judicial emergency vacancy on the U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota. Justice Wright currently serves on the Minnesota Supreme Court. She is the first African-American woman to serve on that court and the first person in Minnesota history to serve as a judge at all three levels of the State judiciary.

I commend Senators KLOBUCHAR and FRANKEN for their tireless efforts in helping to move this nomination to a vote. A vote on her nomination is long overdue. Justice Wright was nominated in April 2015, over 9 months ago. She was reported out of the Judiciary Committee by unanimous voice vote over 4 months ago. After months of needless delay, we could and should have voted to confirm her at the end of the last session.

I know Justice Wright will make a superb Federal judge. Since 2012, she has served as an associate justice on the Minnesota Supreme Court. From 2002 to 2012, she served on the Minnesota Court of Appeals, and prior to her tenure on that court, she was the first African-American to serve as a judge on the district court in the second judicial district, Ramsey County, Minnesota, from 2000 to 2002. In her 15-year judicial career, Justice Wright has presided over or served on panels that decided more than 2,000 cases.

Prior to her appointment to the bench, she was a Federal prosecutor for the district of Minnesota for 5 years. Justice Wright graduated with her B.A., cum laude, from Yale University and earned her law degree from Harvard Law School. Upon graduating from law school, she clerked for Judge Damon J. Keith on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. With her considerable professional experience, it is no surprise that the ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary has unanimously rated her "Well Qualified" to serve on the district court, its highest rating. She also has the enthusiastic support of her home State Senators, Senators FRANKEN and KLOBUCHAR.

Based on her wealth of judicial experience and broad support, I cannot think of any good reason why Justice Wright should not be confirmed with an overwhelming vote.

After Justice Wright is confirmed, there will be votes under a bipartisan agreement on three other district court nominees—one to the district of New Jersey, one to the southern district of Iowa, and one to the northern district of Iowa. These nominees will be confirmed by President's Day. After we return to session in February, I hope that Republican leadership will continue to schedule nominees for confirmation votes to address the 72 current judicial vacancies that we face today, 32 of which are judicial emergencies.

A Politico article last week discussed demands from certain extreme conservative groups for Republican leadership to shut down the confirmation process and block all judicial confirmations for the remainder of the year. I am hopeful that the majority leader will not let moneyed Washington interests decide whether we will uphold our Senatorial oath to provide advice and consent to the President on judicial nominations. Shutting down all judicial confirmations would be a dangerous departure from prior practice. In the last 5 Presidential election years, the Senate has confirmed an average of 30 judicial nominees in the final year prior to Election Day. As both chairman and ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, I have worked with Republicans to confirm judicial nominees, report nominees out of committee, and hold hearings for nominees well into September of Presidential election years.

This was the case in 2008, when I was chairman of the committee with a Republican President, and we worked to confirm judicial nominees as late as September of the Presidential election year. In fact, Senate Democrats helped confirm all 10 of President Bush's district court nominees pending on the Senate floor in a single day by unanimous consent on September 26, 2008. This was similarly true in 2004, when I was ranking member of the committee with a Republican President, and we worked to confirm nominees as late as September of the Presidential election year.

Any attempt to shut down the judicial confirmation process to satisfy moneyed Washington interests groups would be wrong. It would only work to harm our justice system and the American people we were elected to represent. Outstanding nominees from Tennessee, Maryland, New Jersey, Nebraska, New York, and California have been pending on the floor for months. Nearly all of them would fill emergency vacancies. Votes on these nominees must be scheduled without further delay.

In addition to these pending nominees, there are also four Pennsylvania district court nominees and a Rhode Island nominee that the Senate Judiciary Committee is poised to report out this month. And in committee, nominees from States represented by Republican Senators—including Florida, Georgia, Oklahoma, Utah, Wisconsin, and Indiana—continue to wait for a hearing. It is up to the Senators from those States to urge their leadership to consider these nominees without delay so they can serve the people of those great States.

I urge a vote for her confirmation.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all time on both sides be yielded back.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of

Wilhelmina Marie Wright, of Minnesota, to be United States District Judge for the District of Minnesota?

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), and the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 58, nays 36, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 3 Ex.]

YEAS—58

Alexander	Feinstein	Mikulski
Ayotte	Flake	Murphy
Baldwin	Franken	Murray
Bennet	Gillibrand	Nelson
Blumenthal	Grassley	Peters
Booker	Hatch	Reed
Boxer	Heinrich	Reid
Brown	Heitkamp	Schatz
Cantwell	Hirono	Schumer
Capito	Kaine	Shaheen
Cardin	King	Stabenow
Carper	Kirk	Tester
Casey	Klobuchar	Udall
Coats	Leahy	Vitter
Collins	Manchin	Warner
Coons	Markey	Warren
Corker	McCaskill	Whitehouse
Donnelly	McConnell	Wyden
Durbin	Menendez	
Ernst	Merkley	

NAYS—36

Barrasso	Heller	Portman
Blunt	Hoeben	Risch
Boozman	Inhofe	Roberts
Burr	Isakson	Rounds
Cassidy	Johnson	Sasse
Cochran	Lankford	Sessions
Cotton	Lee	Shelby
Crapo	McCain	Sullivan
Daines	Moran	Thune
Enzi	Murkowski	Tillis
Fischer	Paul	Toomey
Gardner	Perdue	Wicker

NOT VOTING—6

Cornyn	Graham	Sanders
Cruz	Rubio	Scott

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume legislative action.

The majority leader is recognized.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business,

with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST INDIA

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I condemn the recent terrorist attack on the Indian Pathankot Air Force Station, which took the lives of seven Indian security force personnel, as well as the attack on the Indian Consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan. These deplorable acts of aggression threaten to undermine India's security and also its peaceful activities in Afghanistan, which are in the interests of both nations, as well as the United States.

It is my understanding that a Pakistan-based terrorist group is likely responsible for the attack, and it is imperative that these terrorists be brought to justice. The United States must stand shoulder-to-shoulder with India in facing this common security threat. As violent, Islamic extremism emanating from Pakistan continues to threaten the long-term stability of the region, it is increasingly important that Pakistan reject such aggression and do everything in its power to root out and eliminate these terrorists.

#### THE CONTINUING CHALLENGE OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, yesterday Americans once again paused to remember a great and prophetic leader, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Chances are, you heard a snippet yesterday of Dr. King's immortal "I Have a Dream" speech.

Maybe you heard a tape of Dr. King dreaming of that day when "my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." That is the Martin Luther King, Jr., that we like to remember: the dreamer. But Dr. King did more than inspire us. He challenged us. And he challenges us still.

Dr. King told us about his dream for America in 1963. He was murdered in 1968. In the 5 years between the March on Washington and his death, Dr. King's mission—and his challenges to us—grew.

Like the prophet he was, in his final years, Dr. King spoke more and more frequently and forcefully about injustice. Many of the injustices that Dr. King spoke of remain with us today. Some are even greater today than when Dr. King died.

Three years after Dr. King's assassination, the writer Carl Wendell Hines penned a poem which he entitled, "A Dead Man's Dream." These are his words:

Now that he is safely dead let us praise him  
Build monuments to his glory, sing hosannas  
to his name.

Dead men make such convenient heroes.  
They cannot rise to challenge the images we  
would fashion from their lives.

And besides,

it is easier to build monuments

than to make a better world.

So now that he is safely dead

We, with eased consciences, can teach our  
children that he was a great man,

Knowing that the cause for which he lived is  
still a cause

And the dream for which he died is still a  
dream

A dead man's dream.

So wrote the poet Carl Wendell Hines 45 years ago.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were two of the most important laws passed in the last century. Dr. King's leadership and the sacrifices of millions of other men and women of good faith who believed in his mission were indispensable to the passage of those two historic laws.

But Dr. King knew that civil rights and voting rights were only partial victories without economic justice. As he, himself, said of the now iconic Greensboro lunch counter sit-ins: "What good is having the right to sit at a lunch counter if you can't afford to buy a hamburger?"

At the end of his life, Dr. King was planning what he called the Poor People's Campaign. He was challenging America to offer greater economic justice and opportunity to poor people of all races and backgrounds. We have much more work to do if we are going to make that part of Dr. King's dream a reality.

The Great Recession ended officially in 2009. Economic growth has returned to America. But for African Americans and many other Americans, economic fairness is farther out of reach than it's been in decades.

Wall Street has regained all of the value it lost in the Great Recession and then some. But middle-class and working-class Americans haven't recovered from that economic disaster.

When you factor in inflation, the average American family hasn't had a raise since 1971, shortly after Dr. King's death. A recent survey shows that 62 percent of Americans have less than \$1,000 in their savings accounts—and a third of those undersavers have no savings account at all.

In 1965, the average CEO was paid 20 times as much as the average worker in his or her—usually his—company. Today the average CEO earns more than 295 times as much as the average worker.

The economic disparities are even greater when you factor in race. Think about this: African Americans are almost three times more likely to live in poverty today than White Americans. And the median net worth of White households is 13 times the level for Black households.

We have a long way to go to achieve Dr. King's dream of economic justice and fairness in America. We should strengthen the Wall Street reforms that Congress passed to prevent a repeat of the kind of recklessness that caused the Great Recession, not gut those reforms.

Dr. King was murdered in Memphis, TN, where he had gone to show support for striking sanitation workers. Two months earlier, two black sanitation workers in Memphis had been crushed to death by faulty equipment. The city's sanitation workers organized a strike for job safety, better pay, and the right to unionize; and Dr. King took on their cause.

For years now, the rights of working people to band together and unionize has been under attack—an attack financed by wealthy corporate interests.

Earlier this month, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments in *Friedrichs v. California Teachers' Association*, which asks the Court to overrule decades of precedent protecting the ability of working people to win fair wages and working conditions through effective unionizing.

If we truly believe in the America Martin Luther King gave his life for, we should protect the right of workers to form and join unions, not work to diminish and destroy that right.

The words that Dr. King spoke at the 1963 March on Washington have become part of our American creed. But the 1963 March was not the first time that Martin Luther King had spoken to a large crowd in Washington.

In 1957, on the third anniversary of the Supreme Court's historic *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that found segregated, "separate but equal" schools to be inherently unequal and unconstitutional, a 29-year-old Martin Luther King spoke in Washington at a rally billed as a Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom. For 3 years, Southern States had engaged in what they called "massive resistance" to the Supreme Court's ruling.

Martin Luther King titled his remarks at the 1957 Prayer Pilgrimage Give Us the Ballot. His message was simple: If Congress and other elected officials will not enforce the law of the land, give African Americans the ballot, and "we will elect legislatures that will."

Eight years later, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act. For years, the Voting Rights Act was hailed by both parties as a great achievement. It was repeatedly reauthorized by large, bipartisan majorities in Congress.

In 2013, however, a slim conservative majority on the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act in *Shelby County v. Holder* by striking down the provision that required certain jurisdictions to preclear any changes to their voting laws with the Department of Justice.

If we truly believe in Dr. King's dream for America, let's work together to restore the Voting Rights Act this year.

One year to the day before he died, Dr. King delivered a sermon at Riverside Church in New York City that cost him the support of many old political allies. It was a speech condemning America's actions in the war in Vietnam.