



Obama: GOP jeopardizing high court integrity, Democrats will retaliate

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Mark Kirk, R-Ill., met with Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland on Tuesday and called on his GOP Senate colleagues to be "rational" and not block consideration of President Barack Obama's pick.

President Obama argued Thursday that the Republican tactics that are denying his Supreme Court nominee a confirmation vote could lead Democrats to retaliate - making it all but impossible for future justices to get confirmed during divided government.

The town hall event with students and faculty at 2:30 p.m. CDT (1930 GMT) is part of a White House campaign to try to pressure the Republican-controlled U.S. Senate to approve Garland, 63, who grew up in a Chicago suburb.

U.S. President Barack Obama returned to the school where he once taught to warn Republicans' "unprecedented" refusal to consider his Supreme Court nominee could erode the "institutional integrity of the judicial branch" and cause the American people to lose confidence in the court.

Just 39 when he was nominated, Estrada had been raised in the Honduras and immigrated to the United States when he was 17; he graduated from Columbia University and went on to Harvard Law, where he was Law Review editor.

Garland has been meeting with Democratic and Republican senators on Capitol Hill, but there is no indication the sessions are influencing the political calculus of the Senate Republican leadership.

"It's my hope that, as more and more senators meet with him and as more and more senators hear concerns from their constituents, the odds that there will be a hearing for this talented nominee will increase", Coons said.

Obama said it would be a "disaster" for courts if there was a continued trend of different parties controlling the Senate and White House.

Obama previously nominated Supreme Court Justices Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor.

Duckworth said taking the congressional oath of office "does not cease to apply in an election year, nor does it cease to exist for the benefit of a political party that lost the last presidential election and wishes to impose a procedural do-over".

"It is perfectly acceptable for Republicans to decide, even though Merrick Garland is highly qualified, even though he's indisputably a good and fair judge", not to vote for him, Obama said.

Obama said he's also thought more about diversity when selecting military leaders, who are overwhelmingly white and male, and called for a discussion about promoting diversity in all fields.

President Barack Obama is headed back to school on Thursday as he continues to press the case for the stymied nomination of Judge Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court. "Judge Garland has my full support", said Brown.

Filling the deciding seat on the Supreme Court "could impact our country for decades", McConnell said, and "could dramatically affect our most cherished Constitutional rights like those contained in the First and Second Amendments".

"Let's see if after that meeting Senator Grassley still holds to the position that there should not be hearings."

Afterward, he said Obama's push for Garland has been effective in the world of public opinion. "If you talk to Republicans, they'll often point to the Bork nomination as where this all started".

Obama lamented during his Q&A that most Republicans had determined it was more important to placate their base "in a way that is dangerous", and condemned those who had "not even shown the courtesy of meeting [Garland]".

Roger Pilon, vice president for legal affairs for the Cato Institute, a libertarian research group, said the fact that Obama's opposition did not come in an election year, like this one, makes the actions worse.