



Obama: Senate Republicans' Decision to Oppose SCOTUS Nomination 'Dangerous'

Marty Perkins

April 14, 2016

At a town hall event at the University of Chicago Law School - where Obama taught constitutional law for 10 years - a student asked him "what diverse characteristics" Merrick Garland, his nominee to replace the late Justice Antonin Scalia, would bring to the high court.

When Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), chairman of the Judiciary Committee, returned to Capitol Hill this week, he was ready to rumble with anyone and everyone who suggested SCOTUS confirmations have become too politicized.

President Barack Obama accused Senate Republicans on Thursday of jeopardizing the "integrity of the judicial branch" by refusing to consider his "extraordinary" nominee to the Supreme Court. Instead of just letting him nominate someone and then rejecting the nominee, they reacted like petulant children and declared that they wouldn't even listen to anyone he might put forward. But in a signal that Democrats might already be thinking about an alternative plan, Durbin said there were other legislative maneuvers that "we are actively considering" and that a determination on how to proceed could emerge in the coming weeks.

"Yet even The New York Times has had to admit that President Obama's current nominee would give Americans the most left-wing Supreme Court in 50 years". Only two of the 54 Republicans in the 100-seat Senate have said Garland deserves hearings and a vote. "Justices appointed by Republicans are generally committed to following the law", he said.

"I don't have the luxury of just not doing anything and then being able to stand back and feel as if my conscience is very clear", Obama said.

Sen. Mark Kirk, R-Illinois, who is also in a tough re-election bid, met with Garland last week.

McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, has vowed not to allow a hearing or a vote on Garland, now the chief judge on the federal Court of Appeals District of Columbia Circuit.

Most Republican senators have backed McConnell's stance.

Above all, Obama explained on Thursday, he was looking for a qualified nominee.

Obama called Garland - who was born in Chicago, raised in north suburban Lincolnwood and attended Niles West High School in Skokie - the "ideal" candidate for a polarized society.

Merrick Garland is scheduled to meet with Sen.

Some Republican senators have started to meet with Garland and called for hearings on his nomination, but McConnell, who controls the chamber's legislative agenda, said this week, "It's safe to say there will not be hearings or votes". And I have confidence that if I stick to that, if I do that, if I make sure that I'm broadening the search, broadening the pool, looking at a bunch of folks, even if they're not going through the conventional paths, that I'll end up - the process will result in diversity.

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. "They refuse to hold a hearing and certainly not have a vote". Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire, Rob Portman of Ohio, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Jeff Flake of Arizona, the White House said.

In a discussion with his former law-school colleague David Strauss, the president framed the Supreme Court fight as a possible source of further division between the parties and an unwelcome transformation of US courts.

Garland is "indisputably qualified", he said, "and nobody really argues otherwise".