



Another hotbed topic: appointment of justice

Lori Copley

February 17, 2016

This year's presidential race is already a muddled mess, with more Republican candidates than one can shake a stick at, and the Democratic Party throwing contenders and what had appeared to be its top choice for candidate — Hillary Clinton.

And now, poor Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia further muddied the waters by dying Feb. 13.

No sooner had Scalia's death been announced than the great debate began over his replacement. President Obama, in his final year of the presidency, wants to move quickly with a replacement. Republicans would like to wait until after the election, hoping that a Republican president will soon be taking office.

Obama, in fact, already has a "short list" of candidates.

At one time, justices were appointed for their legal prowess and ability to interpret the Constitution.

Ilya Shapiro, a legal scholar at the Cato Institute, told CNN what has become obvious to those of us who have lived in the United States in the past quarter-century: "...ultimately, it comes down to a political argument."

But, Shapiro also noted, this year the argument will be particularly heated, to put it mildly. "We are in uncharted waters, especially given the modern, current polarization of the country and of Congress vs. the White House," said Shapiro.

First, the president needs to find a candidate who will put the protection of the constitution over their personal liberal or conservative bias.

Second, it's perhaps time for the nation to consider amending the constitution so that Supreme Court justices are not lifetime appointments. It's time for term limits.

Third, it's time for nominees to be selected through a bipartisan committee process, rather than

having the president throw out names and then seeing if they can stand the heat hurled at them by Congress in confirmation hearings.

Unfortunately, as Shapiro pointed out, the current polarization probably will not allow for any of those options to see fruition.

And that's unfortunate for our country.