

**Statement Of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee,
Hearing On Nominations
January 21, 2015**

I am encouraged that the first hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee under the helm of Chairman Grassley is on judicial nominations. I look forward to working with him throughout the 114th Congress to fill vacancies on our federal courts to ensure that our co-equal branch of government is working at full strength.

I am also eager for this Committee to begin consideration of the nomination of Loretta Lynch to serve as our next Attorney General. Late in the George W. Bush administration, when I served as chairman of this Committee, we were able to confirm the nomination of Michael Mukasey to serve as Attorney General in little more than seven weeks from the date his nomination was announced. Like Ms. Lynch, Mr. Mukasey had been confirmed by the Senate before and I made sure he received swift and fair consideration by this Committee and by the full Senate. More than 10 weeks have now passed since Ms. Lynch's nomination last November. I have every confidence that Chairman Grassley will work hard to ensure her nomination is considered quickly and fairly in the upcoming weeks.

Admittedly, I would like to have proceeded this week to a hearing on the nominee for our Nation's top law enforcement officer, instead of holding a repeat hearing for two non-controversial executive nominees and for four judicial nominees whom we could have considered last year if their home state Republican Senators had agreed. Two of the Texas nominees— Judge Alfred Bennett and Judge Jose Rolando Olvera, Jr.—are nominated to fill judicial emergency vacancies. The third Texas nominee, Judge George C. Hanks, Jr., is nominated to fill a vacancy that has been open for more than seven months and the Utah nominee, Justice Jill N. Parrish, will fill a vacancy that has been open for more than a year. I am pleased that both Texas and both Utah Senators have now consented and these nominees are finally getting a hearing today. All four of the judicial nominees before us today have strong qualifications along with the support of their Republican home state senators.

Today the Committee, for a second time, will hear from two executive nominees who appeared before this Committee six weeks ago: Michelle Lee, who has been nominated to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office; and Daniel Marti, who has been nominated to serve as Intellectual Property Enforcement Coordinator. Both Michelle Lee and Daniel Marti are widely supported by stakeholders across the political spectrum.

Traditionally, when a nominee has had a hearing before this Committee but is not confirmed before the end of the Congress, new members in the next Congress submit written questions or meet with the nominees in private, rather than requiring them to reappear before the full Committee for a second time. In my 40 years in the Senate, I cannot remember a single time that a second hearing was held by this Committee on uncontroversial nominees.

The position of PTO Director has now been vacant for two years, and the IP Enforcement Coordinator—a position created by this Committee—has been vacant for 18 months. Chairman Grassley joined me in calling on the President to swiftly fill the IPEC vacancy over 8 months ago, and Senator Hatch last summer called on the Administration to swiftly fill the PTO Director vacancy.

I look forward to the questions of our three new members, and hope that following this unprecedented second hearing, the Committee can move forward and report these well-qualified nominees without further delay.

I welcome all of the nominees here today.

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