

Prepared Statement by Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
Executive Business Meeting
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Before we turn to today's agenda, I'll make a few comments regarding recent nominations.

I was pleased that Senator Sessions was finally confirmed as our Attorney General last night. He'll do an excellent job. And I'm glad that the Department finally has a permanent Attorney General in place. Of course, the Department needs the rest of its leadership. Last week, the President has nominated the next Deputy Attorney General, Associate Attorney General, and Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Counsel. Once we receive the questionnaire and materials for these nominees, I look forward to scheduling their hearings.

Rod Rosenstein, the nominee to be the Deputy Attorney General, is very familiar to this Committee. He's served as the United States Attorney for the District of Maryland under both the Bush and Obama Administrations. I look forward to seeing him before this Committee again and moving his confirmation along, as he will have an important and significant role in national security.

Rachel Brand, the nominee to be Associate Attorney General, is also a familiar face. She's served in the Department before as well as a Member of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board. And, importantly, she's an Iowan, so I know she'll do well before the Committee.

And of course, last week the President announced his nominee for the Supreme Court, Neil Gorsuch.

I've met with him. I know some of my colleagues have also met with him, including Ranking Member Feinstein. I can't speak for anyone else, but I know I found him as impressive in person as he is on paper.

He's so mainstream that his service on the 10th Circuit has earned him praise from the right and from the left. One liberal Harvard professor said that Judge Gorsuch is "highly credentialed and hard to oppose on the merits." And President Obama's former acting Solicitor General called him "one of the most thoughtful and brilliant judges to have served our nation over the last century."

That's high praise. He seems about as mainstream as you can get.

I'll have more to say about Judge Gorsuch as we continue to review his record. After working with Senator Feinstein, we sent Judge Gorsuch his Senate questionnaire last week. We're looking forward to getting his response to that soon so that we can schedule the hearing dates.

The first item on the agenda today is the Committee Rules. The rules contain changes from the last Congress to strengthen the Committee's ability to conduct oversight.

The changes streamline the process to issue a subpoena when there is agreement between the Chairman and Ranking Member. This will allow the Committee to plan and conduct oversight more efficiently when there is bipartisan agreement.

The new process allows for subpoenas to require witnesses to attend a hearing or deposition or to require the production of documents.

The Committee's rules have historically failed to address the procedures for issuing subpoenas at all, which is unlike most other Senate Committees.

This update to the rules brings the Judiciary Committee in line with rules and practices common to most other Committees that conduct oversight.

The lack of clear rules on subpoenas prevented the Committee from holding some hearings planned for the last Congress because witnesses refused to show up voluntarily. Under these rules, when the Chairman and Ranking Member agree, we can issue a subpoena without a vote, and thus be able to plan hearings more efficiently.

The only bill on our agenda today is the Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act. In addition to Senator Blumenthal, who collaborated with me on this legislation, I'd like to thank our other committee members who cosponsored and contributed to the bill's development. They include Senators Cornyn, Feinstein, Tillis, Leahy, Durbin, Klobuchar, and Franken. Senator Collins, who chairs the Senate Aging Committee, also is a cosponsor.

This committee reported a nearly identical bill by voice vote last September, after I chaired a full committee hearing on the issue of elder abuse and exploitation. This bill is a response to the widespread fraud and scams targeting senior citizens that were disclosed at that 2016 hearing.

Among other reforms, the bill calls for enhanced training of federal investigators and prosecutors. It would ensure that each federal judicial district has at least one prosecutor who is tasked with handling cases of elder abuse. It promotes coordination and data collection at the federal level. To deter fraud, the bill also strengthens penalties for scams that target senior citizens.

Improved collaboration, enforcement, and awareness will make society a safer place for our loved ones who deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

The 3,000-member Elder Justice Coalition has characterized this measure as "one of the most comprehensive and meaningful bills ever developed to address the rapidly increasing problem of elder financial abuse in America." Other groups, such as Consumers Union, the 60 Plus Association, the National Center for Victims of Crime, and the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association, among others, also submitted endorsement letters, which I'd like to include in the record, without objection.

With that, I'll turn to the Ranking Member. Then, we'll turn to Members offering amendments to the Committee Rules and we will vote on the Committee Rules. Then we'll turn to any Senators wishing to speak about the bill and we will vote on the bill.