

Prepared Statement of Senator Charles Grassley (R-Iowa)
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
Executive Business Meeting
February 12, 2015

On today's agenda are two bills that should help us make progress in the fight against domestic human trafficking, a terrible crime. One of these measures is S. 178, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015, which Senator Cornyn introduced last month. I am a cosponsor of this bill, which takes a comprehensive, thoughtful approach to labor and sex trafficking in the United States.

The other bill is S. 166, the Stop Exploitation Through Trafficking Act of 2015, which Senator Klobuchar introduced. It would provide statutory authorization for a national human trafficking hotline, make trafficking survivors automatically eligible for Job Corps participation, and call for the Attorney General to develop a national strategy to combat human trafficking.

Both bills have strong bipartisan support. We will hold them over this week. I expect that both measures will be reported out favorably at our next business meeting on February 26th, following a February 24th full committee hearing on the legislation.

Today, we also have the nominee to be the Attorney General of the United States, Loretta Lynch, on the agenda for the first time. There are a number of requests to hold over her nomination, which I will honor.

At last week's meeting, I said Ms. Lynch provided more responses than she did answers at her hearing. And I expressed my hope that she'd answer our written questions in a more direct and responsive way. Unfortunately, Ms. Lynch didn't provide very many responsive written answers either. Most of her responses were some variation of, "As United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, I have not had the occasion to become familiar with [that particular issue]."

Now I know there's a lot of pressure to answer these questions quickly, but that doesn't excuse the incomplete answers. A nominee to be Attorney General should take time to familiarize herself with the important issues the Department of Justice is facing. I'd note that one of the few questions Ms. Lynch answered was when I asked her, "Do you believe the United States Senate, and in particular the Senate Judiciary Committee, has treated you and your nomination in a fair and appropriate way?" Her response, by the way, came after I had announced the timing of when she would be voted on. She responded, "Yes, and I would like to thank you in particular for the respectful and courteous way that you chaired my confirmation hearing." So, the nominee herself has attested to the fact that she has been and is being treated fairly.

So, I'm going to send some follow-up questions and try one more time to get some additional clarification from the nominee by the end of the day tomorrow. All others sending follow-ups need to adhere to that schedule.

Regarding timing, as I outlined last week, I expect that Ms. Lynch will answer our follow-up questions by next week. Then, under regular order, the Committee will consider her nomination when we meet the week after recess. As I've said before, following regular order so that this nomination is considered in a thorough but fair way is important. I expect that next week we'll spend more time discussing Ms. Lynch's qualifications and views. In the meantime, I hope for more thorough and thoughtful responses to our questions this round. So, she will be held over.