

**Statement of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
Executive Business Meeting
February 12, 2015**

The four judicial nominees listed on today's agenda have the distinction of both of their home state Senators sitting on this Committee. Two of the Texas nominees will fill judicial emergency vacancies. I hope the Senators from Texas and Utah have been able to convince their Republican colleagues that there is no good reason for these nominees to be held over. We should vote them out today.

Loretta Lynch's nomination is listed on the agenda. Her nomination has been pending longer than any modern Attorney General nominee. More than two weeks ago, she testified for nearly eight hours and responded to more than 600 written questions. It is time to vote on her nomination.

In 2007, after Democrats regained control of the Senate, it took just 53 days from President Bush's announcement of Michael Mukasey's nomination to serve as Attorney General to his confirmation. It has been 96 days for Ms. Lynch. After Mr. Mukasey's hearing, Senate Democrats could have held his nomination over in Committee, but we did not. While I ultimately voted against Mr. Mukasey because of his responses relating to questions on torture, I moved his nomination quickly. In fact, I convened a special markup to report his nomination out of Committee as soon as possible. He was confirmed two days later. Republicans should extend the same courtesy to expedite Ms. Lynch, as we did to Mr. Mukasey.

Later today, the Senate will vote to confirm the Secretary of Defense nominee, who testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee last week. The Defense Secretary is a critically important position to fill, and I will vote for him. But so is the Nation's top law enforcement officer. I urge Republican members of this Committee to report Ms. Lynch's nomination and confirm her before we adjourn for the week-long recess.

Also pending before this Committee is the nomination of Sally Yates to serve as the Deputy Attorney General. This is the number two position at the Department of Justice and is vital to our national security and to federal law enforcement. Ms. Yates is no stranger to this Committee – in 2010, she was confirmed unanimously to serve as the United States Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia. I remember that in late 2007, President Bush nominated Mark Filip to fill this position in his administration. I held a hearing two weeks later. It has now been five weeks since Ms. Yates was nominated. I urge the Committee to hold a hearing on her nomination in March and quickly vote to confirm this well-qualified nominee.

I am glad that the Committee will soon be holding a hearing on the devastating issue of human trafficking. Last year, Republicans and Democrats came together to report out meaningful legislation to prevent and combat human trafficking - I am hopeful we can do so again this year. I am glad to see so many on this Committee working hard on solutions to this complex problem, and I look forward to working with each of you when we return from recess.

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