

Statement of

The Honorable Patrick Leahy

United States Senator
Vermont
February 11, 2010

Opening Statement Of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee,
Executive Business Meeting
February 11, 2010

We meet today while the Federal Government and most of the city remains shut down in the wake of a blizzard and record snow falls for this area. I thank the Senators who are with us today.

I commend Senator Klobuchar for chairing and Senator Sessions for serving as the ranking Republican at a confirmation hearing we held earlier this morning. We proceeded with that confirmation hearing for Federal district court nominees from around the country who had traveled to the District of Columbia earlier this week. They include nominees from California, Indiana, Missouri and Nevada. I did not want their travel to Washington between snowstorms to go for naught. Working with them, I rescheduled their hearing from yesterday afternoon to this morning. Some of them had already been delayed from a planned hearing last week when the Republican side was not prepared to proceed. Although we were required to postpone our legislative hearings scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday, I wanted to complete our hearing for these nominees if at all possible, and we have.

Just as I was determined for the Committee to proceed in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and the anthrax attacks on the Senate to consider President Bush's nominees, I have asked the Committee to continue to do its work this week in connection with President Obama's nominees. We have a number of nominees on our agenda today that I would like to advance without further delay. They have all been held over from previous meetings. One was previously reported last year but returned to the President without action and required to be renominated and is being reconsidered. With a majority in support, there is little uncertainty about how the Committee will vote on any of these nominees.

It was also my hope that we would act on a number of legislative items. In particular, I would like to see us act without further delay to report the Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act Improvements that I reintroduced this year. The bill is cosponsored by Senator Sessions, our ranking Republican member, and by Senator Kyl, the Senate Republican's assistant leader. Our bill is intended to address several challenges that qualified state, Federal, and local law enforcement officers have experienced in obtaining certification under LEOSA as enacted in 2004. The bill is largely the same as that favorably reported twice by the Senate Judiciary Committee in the last Congress. It has the support of the Fraternal Order of Police, the National Association of Police Organizations, and the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association.

Unfortunately, I understand that Senator Coburn is objecting and intends to offer a series of amendments. I hope that he will reconsider and allow this legislation for our law officers to move forward.

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