

Statement of
The Honorable Patrick Leahy

United States Senator
Vermont
May 5, 2011

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Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
Executive Business Meeting
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We began this week commending President Obama and his national security team. President Obama pledged that we would bring Osama bin Laden to justice, and last Sunday night we learned that bin Laden has suffered the consequences of his atrocities. Justice has been served.

I hope that Americans will now join together as we did in the weeks and months following the September 11 attacks. I urge all Americans to support our President and all of us in Congress to work with him to keep America safe. It is past time to put aside partisanship and join together for the good of the country. Today we need the same unity that we displayed immediately after the 9/11 attacks.

We should also stand united in our commitment to the rights and principles that define us as a democratic Nation that respects the rule of law. That is what distinguishes us from those who seek to harm us, it is what will ultimately enable us to succeed against them, and it is what people around the world expect of us.

We had the opportunity yesterday to have a hearing with the Attorney General of the United States, a key member of our national security team. He reiterated the need for final Senate action on the nomination of the Deputy Attorney General. That nomination has been pending for too long without final consideration. I agree with him. Among the things we can do to help is to do our part to ensure that the nation's full national security team is in place. The Senate should confirm Deputy Attorney General Jim Cole's nomination without further delay. This key national security nomination has been held up for far too long.

Likewise, we should move forward with our consideration and the confirmation of Lisa Monaco to lead the National Security Division at the Justice Department. Her nomination is on the Committee's agenda for action today. It should not be delayed. Her hearing was three weeks ago. She had no opposition and was praised by those on both sides of the aisle. She has responded to all follow up questions. There is no reason for delay and every reason to proceed at this time in the wake of the events of this week. We need to be vigilant. I would urge the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence to expedite or forego its sequential referral so that her nomination, along with that of the Deputy Attorney General, can both be considered and confirmed next week.

We also have a number of other important nominations on the agenda today. I hope that they will not be unnecessarily delayed.

The legislative matters are both matters this Committee has considered and passed before. With cooperation, we should be able to do so, again. The Environmental Crimes Enforcement Act would ensure that those who commit crimes like those that likely contributed to the horrendous BP oil spill last year are held accountable and that victims of those crimes are compensated. The version we consider today reflects a compromise I worked out last year with Senator Sessions that passed out of this Committee with bipartisan support. I hope we can quickly report this narrowly crafted bill. The other bill on today's agenda is an important transparency measure that this Committee has previously considered. I thank Senators Kohl and Graham for their leadership on this measure to protect American consumers by shining light on secret settlements arising out of product liability cases.

After we move those bills I hope the Committee will turn its attention to the anti-fraud bill that Senator Grassley and I have joined together to develop.

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