

Statement of
The Honorable Patrick Leahy

United States Senator
Vermont
May 12, 2011

Statement Of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
Executive Business Meeting
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Our Committee held a number of important hearings this week on matters that affect all Americans. Republicans and Democrats both value their personal privacy. We have a strong tradition at least since Teddy Roosevelt's time of seeking to protect competition and watching out for American consumers, regardless of party affiliation.

I thank the Ranking Member and other members of the Committee for taking time during the vote Monday to continue last week's business meeting.

This morning we will hold an abbreviated meeting to allow Republican Senators to accept the President's invitation to meet with him at the White House on important budgetary challenges facing the country.

I hope that we can assemble quickly, even at this earlier than normal time for us, and then promptly consider the presidential nominations ready for a vote. Each of the judicial nominations is supported by both home state Senators, Republicans and Democrats. They include the nomination from South Carolina to the Fourth Circuit, supported by Senator Graham; the nomination to the district court in Florida, supported by Senator Rubio; and the nomination to the district court in Illinois supported by Senators Durbin and Kirk. Today is another clear indication of how hard this President has worked to consult with home state Senators of both parties.

In addition, we have a very important nomination to the Justice Department, the nomination of Don Verrilli to serve as the Solicitor General of the United States. I hope we can debate and vote on that nomination today so that he can be reported favorably for Senate action.

Mr. Verrilli is a nominee with an impressive breadth of experience both in Government and in private practice. Mr. Verrilli served as a clerk for Judge J. Skelly Wright on the D.C. Circuit and for Justice William J. Brennan, Jr., on the U.S. Supreme Court. He has argued numerous cases before the Supreme Court, Federal appeals courts and state appellate courts. Mr. Verrilli's extensive experience as an advocate for a wide variety of clients will serve him well as Solicitor General, the top advocate for the United States.

I hope that in light of his qualifications, his nomination will receive bipartisan support from the Committee. In his serious and thoughtful answers to the Committee's questions, including

hundreds of questions for the record, Mr. Verrilli demonstrated both his extensive knowledge of the law and an understanding of the independence required to represent the interests of the Government as Solicitor General.

Our legislative agenda includes two items that this Committee has considered and approved, the Environmental Crimes Enforcement Act and the Sunshine in Litigation Act. The Environmental Crimes Enforcement Act would ensure that those who commit crimes, like those that likely contributed to the horrendous Gulf 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 and which was passed by this Committee with bipartisan support. I thank Senator Kohl and Senator Graham for their leadership on their Sunshine in Litigation bill to protect American consumers by shining light on secret settlements arising out of product liability cases. I would like to see us in position to vote on the Leahy-Grassley Fighting Fraud to Protect Taxpayers Act next week. This is a matter Senator Grassley and I have worked together on for some time that we believe is ready for passage and that will help in our efforts to fight fraud and protect taxpayers.

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