

Statement of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.)
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
Executive Business Meeting
September 19, 2013

Today, we will vote on the nomination of Nina Pillard to fill one of three vacancies on the D.C. Circuit. Professor Pillard's character and qualifications are unassailable. In her 25-year career, she has served in the Justice Department both as a Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Office of Legal Counsel and in the Solicitor General's Office. She served as counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. She is currently a professor of law at Georgetown. And she has argued nine cases before the Supreme Court. Some may not agree with everything she has written as a law professor, but I hope that every member will credit her testimony that she understands the difference between the role of a teacher and advocate and the role she would have as a judge.

We also have before us the nomination of Judge Patricia Wald to serve another term as a member of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board (PCLOB). This board is an important guardian of the American people's privacy rights. Given the recent revelations about the NSA's surveillance programs, a fully functioning PCLOB is more important than ever. The Senate unanimously confirmed Judge Wald to this position in 2012. I hope we can act in that same bipartisan spirit today and report this nomination without delay.

We will also vote on the National Blue Alert Act. This legislation will serve to connect existing state blue alert systems, such as in Texas, Virginia, and Maryland, and will encourage other states to establish these networks, which effectively broadcast information about a suspect who has assaulted a police officer and who is being sought by authorities.

The terrible tragedy at the Navy Yard here in Washington is a sad reminder about the critical importance of coordination among our first responders. Thanks to the bravery of the officers who responded, the perpetrator of the Navy Yard shootings was stopped and not given an opportunity to flee. But we know that in other instances when police officers are assaulted, that suspects try to escape. The National Blue Alert Act will help bring those suspected of assaulting a law enforcement officer to justice more quickly. Like the Bulletproof Vest Partnership reauthorization bill we recently approved, this bill is an effort to make our law enforcement officials, and the public they serve, safer.

The National Blue Alert Act is supported by the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, National Association of Police Organizations, the National Sheriff's Association, the Fraternal Order of Police, just to name a few. I ask unanimous consent that the letters of support be included in the record. I would also note that we expect as many as 150,000 police officers are tuning in to this meeting via our Committee's webcast. I thank them for their service and interest, and I hope we can report this bill today.

#####