

**Statement of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
Executive Business Meeting
June 9, 2016**

A week ago, the Republican standard-bearer attacked the integrity of a sitting judge by making racist comments about his heritage. That should alarm anyone who cares about our independent Federal judiciary. We have yet to hear an apology from the Republican Party's presumptive presidential nominee. And while some Republicans have condemned these remarks, others have tried to make excuses for them. These comments are indefensible and dangerous.

Moreover, if the Republican leaders of this body want to distinguish themselves from the rhetoric of the campaign trail, they need to change course here in the Senate. There is a judicial vacancy crisis, including a critical vacancy on our Nation's highest court. Republicans should allow Chief Judge Garland a public hearing and a confirmation vote this month. They should also allow an up or down vote on the 22 judicial nominees who have been reported favorably by this Committee.

Last month the House passed bipartisan legislation to protect Americans' online communications by an astounding vote of 419 to 0. I am disappointed that some Republicans on this Committee have decided to inject controversial issues into a straight-forward bill with such broad support.

Because Republicans insist on adding poison pill amendments that will tank this otherwise popular bill, I support Senator Lee's request to remove the ECPA reform bill from the markup agenda. But I will keep working with Republicans to see if we can find a path forward on a version of the bill that can be signed into law.

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