

Testimony of
The Honorable Patrick Leahy

December 5, 2001

Today, the Judiciary Committee is holding its sixteenth nominations hearing and its tenth judicial nominations hearing since the Senate reorganized this summer. I thank Senator Durbin for volunteering to chair today's hearing for these six nominees. Since July, when the Senate was allowed to reorganize and the Committee's membership was set, we have maintained a strong effort to consider judicial and executive nominees.

During these last six, difficult months, the Committee has worked hard to report 27 judicial nominations favorably to the Senate, including six to the Courts of Appeals. This is nearly twice the total number of judges that were confirmed in all of 1989, the first year of the first Bush Administration, and it includes twice as many judges to the Courts of Appeal as were confirmed in the first year of the Clinton Administration. It is also more judges than were confirmed in all of the 1996 session. In addition, if we are able to consider today's five judicial nominees on an expedited basis, The Senate may be able to confirm 32 judges - a number that would be more than double the number confirmed in the first year of the first Bush Administration, more than were confirmed in the first year of the Clinton Administration when the White House and the Senate were controlled by the same party, and approximately the total confirmations for the 12 months of 1997 and for all of 1999.

Thus, despite all the obstacles we have faced this year, we have matched or exceeded the number of confirmations of judges during the first year of the first Bush Administration, the first year of the Clinton Administration and the last year of the first Clinton term. We are holding more hearings on more judicial nominees faster and reporting and confirming more than during the last six and one-half years. By way of example, each of the judicial nominees participating in this morning's hearing has been pending for less than 60 days since receipt of the ABA peer review.

Today we also consider the nomination of Mauricio Tamargo to head the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission. Mr. Tamargo comes highly recommended by Representatives for whom and with whom he has worked. He is also supported by his Democratic and Republican Senators from Florida, where he was raised, and from Virginia, where he now lives. I look forward to Mr. Tamargo's answers to questions about the future direction of the Commission he is nominated to chair.