

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

When a vacancy occurs on the Supreme Court or on other Federal benches, the President chooses potential nominees for the open seat. Next, various government agencies, including the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, conduct extensive background investigations of the potential nominees before the President submits his or her name to the Senate. Upon nomination, a candidate is then subject to a hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, of which I am a member, and a vote by the full Senate before he or she can be confirmed. Obviously, there is a stringent set of requirements that ensures the quality and competency of our federal judges, who are given lifetime appointments.

The Constitution gave the Senate the responsibility to “advise and consent” the President on nominations to the judiciary. As a Senator, I do not take this duty lightly. Whether the nomination occurs under a Democratic or Republican Administration, we must ensure that positions on the Federal Judiciary are held only by those who we are convinced are impartial, unbiased, fair, and whose only guiding ideology is to follow the Constitution to apply equal justice to all.

Since President Bush took office, I have voted to confirm 198 of his judicial nominations and have only opposed 16 nominations – a 92.5 percent confirmation rate. Prior to that, I only opposed one nomination of the first President Bush and President Clinton. I have only opposed those nominees whose views and judicial philosophies are so far out of the mainstream as to place our liberties at risk.