

less, and I believe you when you say you are. Instead, what we must find out is what sort of natural law philosophy you would employ as a Justice of the Supreme Court, for that Court is in transition and if you are confirmed, you will play a large role in determining what direction it will take in the future.

Judge, because of your youth and, God bless you for it—I never thought I would be sitting here talking about the youth of a nominee to the Supreme Court, but I am. Heck, you are 6, 7 years younger than I. I am 48. How old are you, Judge? Forty-two? Forty-three?

Judge THOMAS. Well, I have aged over the last 10 weeks. [Laughter.]

But I am 43.

The CHAIRMAN. Forty-three years old. Because of your youth, Judge, you will be the first Supreme Court Justice the Senate will ever have confirmed, if it does, that will most likely write more of his opinions in the 21st century than he will write in the 20th century. To acknowledge that fact alone, Judge, is to recognize the unique significance of your nomination and the care with which this committee must look at it.

In closing, Judge Thomas, let me say that this committee's obligation is to be open and to be fair, and I hope you believe we have been that way thus far. We have many serious questions to ask you, Judge, and it will take time to get them all answered. So anytime you need a break, anytime you just get tired sitting there, let us know because we are testing the content of your mind, not your physical constitution to be able to sit there for a long time.

In welcoming you to these hearings, Judge, I welcome you also to a dialog, I believe, that will have historic impact on the Supreme Court, the country, and a historic impact for all Americans. We are pleased to have you join us here today, Judge, in what I consider to be a great endeavor and the most serious obligation this committee can undertake.

Again, welcome, and I will now yield to my senior colleague from the State of South Carolina and the ranking member, Senator Thurmond.

[The prepared statement of Senator Biden follows:]