

With her qualifications, I can understand why Chairman GRASSLEY recommended her to the President for this nomination. What I cannot understand is why moneyed Washington interest groups are calling on Republican Senators to oppose the confirmation of any judicial nominee, regardless of a nominee's merit or qualifications. Judicial nominees like Judge Ebinger have worked hard to build admirable legal careers that have put them at the top of their profession. When judicial nominees submit themselves to the nominations process, they do so expecting and deserving to be considered by Senators exercising their own independent judgement.

Judicial nominees not only deserve our independent and considered judgement, it is our constitutional obligation as Senators to provide it. The duty to provide advice and consent on the President's nominees is our own and cannot be abdicated to Washington political action committees. This is especially true when such political action committees are advocating that we turn our backs on the American people by completely shutting down the judicial confirmation process.

Too many Americans who have sought justice in our Federal courts since last year have instead found delays and empty courtrooms because of Senate Republicans' obstruction on judicial nominees. Over the course of last year, Senate Republicans allowed confirmation votes on just 11 judicial nominees—and judicial vacancies soared across the country. When Senate Republicans took over the majority in January of last year, there were 43 judicial vacancies. Since then, vacancies have dramatically increased to 77—an increase of more than 75 percent. Furthermore, the number of judicial vacancies deemed to be "emergencies" by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts because caseloads in those courts are unmanageably high has nearly tripled under Republican Senate leadership—from 12 when Republicans took over last year to 32 today. Refusing to confirm any judicial nominees for the rest of this year would make the high number of vacancies in our Federal judiciary even worse.

In addition to the vote on Judge Ebinger's confirmation today, we have agreed to vote this week on another Iowa district court judge. When we return from the Presidents' Day recess, I hope Republicans will continue confirming judicial nominees with bipartisan support, as Democrats did when we held the majority. In 2008, when I was chairman of the committee with a Republican President, we worked to confirm judicial nominees as late as September of the Presidential election year. In fact, Senate Democrats helped confirm all 10 of President Bush's district court nominees pending on the Senate floor in a single day by unanimous consent on September 26, 2008. This was similarly true in 2004, when I

was ranking member of the committee with a Republican President, and we worked to confirm nominees as late as September of the Presidential election year.

There are 19 judicial nominees awaiting confirmation on the Senate floor. The next judicial nominee pending after we return from the President's Day recess will be Waverly Crenshaw, an exceptional African-American district court nominee from Tennessee who has the support of his Republican home State Senators, Senators ALEXANDER and CORKER. I hope the Senators from Tennessee will be able to convince their majority leader to schedule the Tennessee nominee's vote to occur this month. This is an emergency judicial vacancy in their State, so it is clear that this position is sorely needed for Tennesseans to receive swift justice in the middle district of Tennessee.

I urge my fellow Senators to vote to confirm Judge Ebinger and look forward to working with my fellow Senators to ensure timely confirmation of the other judicial nominees pending before the Senate.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I yield back time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Ebinger nomination?

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. SASSE), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER), and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN), and the Senator from

Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 83, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 18 Ex.]

YEAS—83

Alexander	Feinstein	Moran
Ayotte	Fischer	Murkowski
Baldwin	Flake	Murphy
Barrasso	Franken	Murray
Bennet	Gardner	Nelson
Blumenthal	Gillibrand	Paul
Booker	Grassley	Perdue
Boozman	Hatch	Peters
Brown	Heinrich	Portman
Burr	Heitkamp	Reed
Cantwell	Hirono	Reid
Capito	Hoeben	Risch
Cardin	Inhofe	Roberts
Carper	Isakson	Rounds
Casey	Kaine	Schatz
Cassidy	King	Schumer
Coats	Kirk	Scott
Cochran	Klobuchar	Sessions
Collins	Lankford	Shelby
Coons	Leahy	Stabenow
Corker	Lee	Sullivan
Cornyn	Manchin	Tester
Crapo	Markey	Thune
Daines	McCaskill	Udall
Donnelly	McConnell	Warner
Durbin	Menendez	Warren
Enzi	Merkley	Wyden
Ernst	Mikulski	

NOT VOTING—17

Blunt	Johnson	Tillis
Boxer	McCain	Toomey
Cotton	Rubio	Vitter
Cruz	Sanders	Whitehouse
Graham	Sasse	Wicker
Heller	Shaheen	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

The majority leader is recognized.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Minnesota.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today for the fifth time to ask unanimous consent for a vote for the Ambassadors to Norway and Sweden. Senator CRUZ has been objecting to this. I appreciate the bipartisan support for these nominees. They made it through the committees without any objections.

These are the 11th and 12th biggest investors in the United States of America. They are our allies. They are our allies in our fight against Russian aggression. Norway shares a border with Russia. Yet every major European