

way or the other, the President indicated yesterday there will be some things he wants to put on it other than the direct funding—whether we can do it at that time or later in the year, we need to do something about increasing judges' pay, and I hope we can do that. Thank you, Mr. President.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

JUDICIAL CONFIRMATION PROCESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to make a few observations about the status of the judicial confirmation process, and then I will turn to another matter.

It has been 108 days since the Senate confirmed a Federal judge of any kind. It last did so the week before Christmas, on December 18, 2007. Since then, the Senate has made precious little progress on judicial nominations. I don't blame the majority leader for that. I think we began this Congress with a general understanding of what we hoped to achieve, and that is still possible. But as of today, we have not confirmed any judicial nominees this year, and the Judiciary Committee has held only one hearing on one circuit court nominee since last September.

Today we will finally be able to confirm some judicial nominees. That is obviously good news, and I applaud that. But after we confirm the judicial nominees on the calendar, that may be it for a while due to the glacial pace at which the Judiciary Committee is proceeding.

It is not as if the committee has been otherwise occupied. This is another week in which the committee could have held a hearing, for example, on the qualified nominees to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, but again it chose not to. These nominees meet the chairman's own criteria for prompt consideration. Nevertheless, they have been inexplicably languishing for hundreds of days without a hearing while the Fourth Circuit is one-third vacant.

We were told that having the support of home State Senators "means a great deal and points toward the kind of qualified consensus nominee that can be quickly confirmed."

Let me say that again. We were told that having the support of home State Senators "means a great deal and points toward the kind of qualified consensus nominee that can be quickly confirmed."

Well, Steven Matthews of South Carolina had the strong support of both of his home State Senators, one of whom, by the way, sits on the Judiciary Committee, but he has been waiting 217 days just to get a hearing.

Judge Robert Conrad of North Carolina, whom the Senate majority unani-

mously confirmed to two Federal positions and most recently to a lifetime position on the district court, has the strong support of both of his home State Senators. Yet he has been waiting for 268 days.

My Democratic colleagues are quick to point to the lack of home State support as a reason not to give someone a hearing. But it is beginning to look as if this criterion is being selectively applied. It is readily used as a reason not to move a nominee, coincidentally, when the nominee is from a State with a Democratic Senator, but it is ignored when the nominee has the support of two Republican Senators. At least that has been the case to date with the Fourth Circuit nominees.

For example, Rod Rosenstein is the U.S. attorney in Maryland. He has been nominated to the Fourth Circuit. By all accounts, Mr. Rosenstein is a fine lawyer and public servant. His peers at the American Bar Association certainly think so. They gave him the ABA's highest rating, "unanimously well qualified."

The Washington Post also thinks Mr. Rosenstein is an outstanding nominee. In an editorial entitled "A Worthy Nominee," the Post noted that Mr. Rosenstein has "earned plaudits for his crackdown on gang violence and public corruption," and that one of his supporters at the head of the Criminal Division during the Clinton administration, Jo Ann Davis, called him a "perfect" candidate for a judgeship:

Smart, savvy and as straight of an arrow as I have ever encountered.

The Post bemoaned the fact that Mr. Rosenstein does not have the support, for some reason, of his home State Senators, and out of deference to them the committee would not process Mr. Rosenstein's nomination. But Mr. Matthews and Judge Conrad do enjoy the strong support of their home State Senators. Yet those nominees can't get a hearing. So it doesn't seem that the same sort of deference is being paid to the Carolina Senators as to others.

I do understand the committee intends to give a hearing to the Fourth Circuit nominee from Virginia because the junior Senator from Virginia—a Democrat—in addition to the senior Senator from Virginia—a Republican—support the nominee. It is great that the committee may actually at some point move a circuit court nominee, especially one to a circuit that is 33 percent vacant. But why is this nominee leap-frogging over two other nominees to the very same circuit, both of whom enjoy the strong support of their home State Senators and both of whom have been pending for hundreds of days longer than the nominee from Virginia?

It looks as though if a Democratic Senator in the Fourth Circuit opposes the nominee, then the committee will not move the nominee, and if a Democratic Senator of the Fourth Circuit supports the nominee, then the committee will move the nominee. But if

two Republican Senators in the Fourth Circuit—or, in this case, four Republican Senators in that circuit—support two nominees, that doesn't seem to mean anything.

We need to treat all of the Senators who represent the Fourth Circuit consistently and fairly. We can do that by holding a joint hearing for Mr. Matthews and Judge Conrad. Doing so will make up for lost time and will afford the Carolina Senators the respect to which they are entitled.

TRIBUTE TO CORPORAL WINDELL JERYD SIMMONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, in Kentucky there is a family mourning the loss of a young man who was taken from them entirely too soon. On September 21, 2006, CPL Windell Jeryd Simmons was tragically killed when an improvised explosive device detonated under his humvee while on patrol near Taji, Iraq. The Hopkinsville, KY, soldier was 20 years old.

For his valor in service, Corporal Simmons received several medals, awards, and decorations, including the Army Good Conduct Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Purple Heart, and the Bronze Star.

Jeryd, as he was known, may have been born in Nuremberg, Germany, in 1986, but he was raised in Hopkinsville. Jeryd's mother, Betty Simmons-Mayo, tells us how her son would always greet her whenever he entered a room.

Jeryd used to always enter a room and say, "Hey Mom." Then whenever he would come back into the room, he would say, "Hey, Mom" again, she recalls. I think he would say "Hey, Mom" at least 15 times a day. He would start his e-mails from Iraq with "Hey, Mom."

But her friendly son was not without his mischievous side. Betty also recalls a time when Jeryd hid a water gun behind his back and would sneakily shoot his mother, brother, and sister with it every time they walked by. Whenever one of his victims accused him of being a culprit, Jeryd would plead innocence. So his mother hatched a scheme to prank the prankster. She said:

Jeryd loved to play practical jokes. To get him back, I got everyone a water balloon, and the next time he was outside, we threw balloons at him. He stopped shooting everyone after that.

Jeryd graduated from Christian County High School in 2004 and set his sights on enlisting in the U.S. Army. He had made his decision to serve his country before graduating.

Jeryd's friends remember him as a natural leader, somebody they would dearly miss, but also someone they knew would make them proud for his service in uniform.

"He was like the ring leader. He was the best," says Tad Abukuppeh, a high school classmate. "No matter what it was, he was always energetic about everything we did together."

Another friend, Justin Baker, agrees.