

helping to break down racial barriers in this country. It is fitting that today the Senate is turning to a confirmation vote that will increase racial diversity on our Federal bench. Justice Wilhelmina Wright is nominated to a judicial emergency vacancy on the U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota. Justice Wright currently serves on the Minnesota Supreme Court. She is the first African-American woman to serve on that court and the first person in Minnesota history to serve as a judge at all three levels of the State judiciary.

I commend Senators KLOBUCHAR and FRANKEN for their tireless efforts in helping to move this nomination to a vote. A vote on her nomination is long overdue. Justice Wright was nominated in April 2015, over 9 months ago. She was reported out of the Judiciary Committee by unanimous voice vote over 4 months ago. After months of needless delay, we could and should have voted to confirm her at the end of the last session.

I know Justice Wright will make a superb Federal judge. Since 2012, she has served as an associate justice on the Minnesota Supreme Court. From 2002 to 2012, she served on the Minnesota Court of Appeals, and prior to her tenure on that court, she was the first African-American to serve as a judge on the district court in the second judicial district, Ramsey County, Minnesota, from 2000 to 2002. In her 15-year judicial career, Justice Wright has presided over or served on panels that decided more than 2,000 cases.

Prior to her appointment to the bench, she was a Federal prosecutor for the district of Minnesota for 5 years. Justice Wright graduated with her B.A., cum laude, from Yale University and earned her law degree from Harvard Law School. Upon graduating from law school, she clerked for Judge Damon J. Keith on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. With her considerable professional experience, it is no surprise that the ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary has unanimously rated her "Well Qualified" to serve on the district court, its highest rating. She also has the enthusiastic support of her home State Senators, Senators FRANKEN and KLOBUCHAR.

Based on her wealth of judicial experience and broad support, I cannot think of any good reason why Justice Wright should not be confirmed with an overwhelming vote.

After Justice Wright is confirmed, there will be votes under a bipartisan agreement on three other district court nominees—one to the district of New Jersey, one to the southern district of Iowa, and one to the northern district of Iowa. These nominees will be confirmed by President's Day. After we return to session in February, I hope that Republican leadership will continue to schedule nominees for confirmation votes to address the 72 current judicial vacancies that we face today, 32 of which are judicial emergencies.

A Politico article last week discussed demands from certain extreme conservative groups for Republican leadership to shut down the confirmation process and block all judicial confirmations for the remainder of the year. I am hopeful that the majority leader will not let moneyed Washington interests decide whether we will uphold our Senatorial oath to provide advice and consent to the President on judicial nominations. Shutting down all judicial confirmations would be a dangerous departure from prior practice. In the last 5 Presidential election years, the Senate has confirmed an average of 30 judicial nominees in the final year prior to Election Day. As both chairman and ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, I have worked with Republicans to confirm judicial nominees, report nominees out of committee, and hold hearings for nominees well into September of Presidential election years.

This was the case in 2008, when I was chairman of the committee with a Republican President, and 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.

Any attempt to shut down the judicial confirmation process to satisfy moneyed Washington interests would be wrong. It would only work to harm our justice system and the American people we were elected to represent. Outstanding nominees from Tennessee, Maryland, New Jersey, Nebraska, New York, and California have been pending on the floor for months. Nearly all of them would fill emergency vacancies. Votes on these nominees must be scheduled without further delay.

In addition to these pending nominees, there are also four Pennsylvania district court nominees and a Rhode Island nominee that the Senate Judiciary Committee is poised to report out this month. And in committee, nominees from States represented by Republican Senators—including Florida, Georgia, Oklahoma, Utah, Wisconsin, and Indiana—continue to wait for a hearing. It is up to the Senators from those States to urge their leadership to consider these nominees without delay so they can serve the people of those great States.

I urge a vote for her confirmation.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all time on both sides be yielded back.

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

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

Wilhelmina Marie Wright, of Minnesota, to be United States District Judge for the District of Minnesota?

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, 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. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), and the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 58, nays 36, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 3 Ex.]

YEAS—58

Alexander	Feinstein	Mikulski
Ayotte	Flake	Murphy
Baldwin	Franken	Murray
Bennet	Gillibrand	Nelson
Blumenthal	Grassley	Peters
Booker	Hatch	Reed
Boxer	Heinrich	Reid
Brown	Heitkamp	Schatz
Cantwell	Hirono	Schumer
Capito	Kaine	Shaheen
Cardin	King	Stabenow
Carper	Kirk	Tester
Casey	Klobuchar	Udall
Coats	Leahy	Vitter
Collins	Manchin	Warner
Coons	Markey	Warren
Corker	McCaskill	Whitehouse
Donnelly	McConnell	Wyden
Durbin	Menendez	
Ernst	Merkley	

NAYS—36

Barrasso	Heller	Portman
Blunt	Hoeven	Risch
Boozman	Inhofe	Roberts
Burr	Isakson	Rounds
Cassidy	Johnson	Sasse
Cochran	Lankford	Sessions
Cotton	Lee	Shelby
Crapo	McCain	Sullivan
Daines	Moran	Thune
Enzi	Murkowski	Tillis
Fischer	Paul	Toomey
Gardner	Perdue	Wicker

NOT VOTING—6

Cornyn	Graham	Sanders
Cruz	Rubio	Scott

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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

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,