



Durbin: Senate Republicans Changing Rules to Pack Federal Courts With Ideological Nominees

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WASHINGTON – In a speech on the Senate floor, U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today slammed Senate Republicans for their proposed Senate rules change, which would further erode the rights of Senators by limiting the debate time on most nominations. If Senate Republicans’ attempt to change the rules is successful, most nominations, including lifetime appointments to the federal district court bench, would be subject to up to only two hours of post-cloture debate time on the Senate floor, instead of up to 30 hours.

“There’s no emergency that justifies changing the Senate rules. Senator McConnell himself admitted that the Senate has plenty of time to consider nominees. This is all about avoiding close scrutiny for extreme ideological nominees that Republicans want to pack on to the federal courts for lifetime appointments,” Durbin said. **“I oppose this rules change. Let’s do our job when it comes to conducting due diligence and provide informed advice and consent for lifetime appointments to the federal bench.”**

Over the past two years, Senate Republicans have continually eroded many guardrails in the nominations process. For example, Senate Republicans have stopped respecting blue slips on circuit court nominations. And they have stopped moving bipartisan board and commission nominations in pairs, which used to ensure that each party is represented on important agencies such as the Securities and Exchange Commission, National Labor Relations Board, and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.

And the pace for confirming judges has been faster than in previous years. In President Trump’s first two years, the Senate confirmed 85 Article III judges—compared to 62

judges confirmed in President Obama's first two years. And the number of judges confirmed last Congress was nearly four times as many as the number confirmed the Congress before.

In his speech on the Senate floor, Durbin pointed out that last year, two judicial nominees, Thomas Farr and Ryan Bounds, had their nominations withdrawn from the Senate floor by the Republican leader after the Senate had held a cloture vote, because information came to light during the floor debate that caused Senators to change their minds about confirming them to lifetime appointments. These examples show the importance of having 30 hours of Senate floor debate, not just two, for nominees seeking lifetime appointments.