

Minnesota to have two Senators representing them here in this Chamber. I wish Senator Coleman the very best in his future endeavors and again thank Senator MCCONNELL for his remarks which I know speak on behalf of all Senators from both sides of the aisle.

SOTOMAYOR NOMINATION

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, Senator MCCONNELL spoke previously about the nomination of Judge Sotomayor to the Supreme Court. This is a rare, historic opportunity for the Senate to consider a nomination sent to us by the President. It doesn't happen very often. In my career, my 13th year in the Senate, this will be my third opportunity in the Judiciary Committee to actually ask questions of someone who aspires to serve on the highest Court of the land, a lifetime appointment and a very important appointment in terms of our Nation's history.

The question raised by Senator MCCONNELL is entirely appropriate. I commend him because his statement really goes to the heart of what this process should be about. It wasn't about the personality of the judge or any personal trait, it was about her beliefs and whether they are the kinds of beliefs we would like to see enshrined in her service as a Supreme Court Justice.

Particularly, Senator MCCONNELL raised an issue which is very important to him. It is the issue of free speech in relation to political campaigns. I know this is important because Senator MCCONNELL took an exceptional position in being in opposition to McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform. This was a reform which these two Senators—one Republican and the other Democrat—brought to the Senate in an effort to reduce the impact of corporate contributions and large contributions in our political campaigns. It was their belief that the so-called soft money which avoided some of the restrictions that are applied to other contributions had gone too far in the extreme. Senator MCCONNELL was not alone, but he really was in the minority in opposing the McCain-Feingold position. He even went so far as to file documents before the courts arguing that this was a violation of free speech. The courts did not find in his favor and ruled that McCain-Feingold was, in fact, permissible and constitutional.

Now Senator MCCONNELL comes to the floor and argues that Judge Sotomayor apparently doesn't agree with his point of view either. That is certainly Senator MCCONNELL's right to do. But to question whether she should be allowed to serve on the Supreme Court because she disagrees with Senator MCCONNELL's minority views on McCain-Feingold and the use of money in political campaigns is an unfair characterization of her position. Keep in mind that Judge Sotomayor comes to this nomination with an ex-

traordinary background. She brings more Federal judicial experience to the Supreme Court, if approved, than any Justice nominated in over 100 years and more overall judicial experience than anyone confirmed to the Court in the past 70 years.

She was first nominated by a Republican President to serve on the Federal court, President George Herbert Walker Bush. Then she was promoted to the next level court, the circuit court, by President Clinton, a Democratic President—bipartisan support, approval of the Senate both times, and no one suggested her views were radical or not in the mainstream of judicial thinking in America.

So when Senator MCCONNELL raises this point, it reflects the fact that his view of campaign finance, his view of restrictions on contributions is, in fact, a minority position, one that the court has not approved of and most Americans may not agree with. Most Americans believe we should keep a close eye on political contributions to make sure they don't corrupt our political process. We want to honor free speech. Some of us believe the Court decision in Buckley v. Valeo went to an extreme and basically argued that the expenditure of money in a political campaign was an exercise of free speech. That argument leads to the conclusion that a millionaire is entitled to more free speech than the common person who couldn't spend that kind of money on a political campaign.

I might also add, we have been trying to move forward a piece of legislation that will give even more disclosure on political campaign financing. It would require the electronic filing of campaign finance reports. We have been trying to move this forward. There has been resistance on the other side of the aisle.

I think it is bipartisan and consistent with the goals of this Congress for us to have this kind of disclosure, for us to recognize that freedom of speech brings with it certain obligations, and that Judge Sotomayor's rulings in cases relating to free speech have been entirely consistent with the values of our country and in the mainstream of this Nation.

Next Monday, her nomination comes before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has used his 5 minutes.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, it will go on for several days, and I will have a chance to speak then. I will yield the floor now. Thank you.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Thank you, Madam President.

COMMENDING COLEMAN

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, in 1998, Norm Coleman ran for Governor of Minnesota against the son of

one of the most revered Members of this body, Hubert Humphrey, who was also a former Vice President of the United States, and a noted wrestler, Jesse Ventura, who was elected Governor.

In 2002, Norm Coleman ran a campaign against Paul Wellstone, a beloved Member of this body who was tragically killed in an airplane crash a week or so before the election, bringing into the race a former Vice President of the United States, a former U.S. Senator and Ambassador, Walter Mondale. The whole country watched and was riveted by that race during that last week. Norm Coleman won that race.

This past year, Norm Coleman was a participant in a race that also riveted the Nation. He was opposed by a well-known television personality, AL FRANKEN, now a Member of this body. The race went on for 2 years, with much publicity. Then it went on for another 8 months after election day.

If Norm Coleman could have found some way to make the 2000 Presidential election Bush v. Gore v. Coleman, Norm would have been a participant in every single one of the most spectacular political races of the last decade.

Norm and I arrived in the Senate on the same day in 2003. We not only were Members of the Senate family, which we often talk about here and which extends to both sides of the aisle, we were Members of the same class, and are good friends.

My wife, Honey, and I got to know Norm and his wife, Laurie, the mother of their two children. We know of his love for his family and of his deep religious faith. Each of us in the Senate has enjoyed the good humor and cheer and civil relationship that Norm has had with his colleagues, both Democrats and Republicans.

But most memorable—and the Republican leader spoke of some of this—is Norm Coleman's record of service to our country: Chief prosecutor for the State of Minnesota, mayor of St. Paul, Senator.

He has been a strong, eloquent, effective voice for the center of this country—an independent voice of the kind our country and the Republican Party needs to attract and represent and continue to bring into our party and into our political process the center.

The political campaigns of Norm Coleman have been more spectacular than those of any of us in the Senate. But the public service chapters of his life have been equally impressive. As this door closes, I am confident new ones will open.

When I was Governor of Tennessee, my chief of staff, a former Marine, came in and said to me during my last years: Governor, I would like to say to you that people remember the last thing you do. And I had no idea why he said that to me, but I never could get it out of my mind, and I think it is pretty good advice.