

In recent years, after the hearings have taken place, a Senator will say: I have a few more questions. We will send them. Usually there would be two or three or four or five questions. Secretary Geithner, who recently resigned as Secretary of the Treasury, got 28 questions.

Mr. McCONNELL. Would the majority leader yield for a question?

Mr. REID. No, I am going to finish my statement.

What happens in these committees is they ask all the questions they want, but 28 questions is not enough for them. For example, on Gina McCarthy—the President asked her to be the Director of the EPA—more than 1,100 questions were submitted to her after the hearing.

Jack Lew—who has basically had many jobs in government—had a full hearing. They gave him more than 700 questions to answer. This has gotten way out of hand. Anything they can do to slow things down, that is what they do.

Executive and judicial nominees who are ready to be confirmed by the Senate have been pending an average of 200 days—more than 6 months. Let me repeat that: Executive and judicial nominees who are ready to be confirmed by the Senate have been pending an average of 200 days. That is more than 6 months. The confirmation process has moved at a glacial pace because of extraordinary Republican obstruction.

Cloture has been filed on 58 of President Obama's nominees—58. By this point in President Bush's term, cloture had been filed on a handful of nominees. Republicans are not blocking these nominations because they object to the qualifications of the nominees.

This body passed something called Dodd-Frank. It was an answer to what was going on on Wall Street—the collapse of Wall Street. Richard Cordray, the nominee to lead the Consumer Finance Bureau—which is part of that bill that is now law—is a perfect example. He was nominated by the President of the United States almost 2 years ago—23 months ago. Republicans are not concerned about his ability to do the job. They are afraid, I guess, he would do his job too well. He is extremely well-qualified. If anything, they are concerned he might, as I said, actually do the job, protecting consumers from the kind of corporate greed that collapsed the financial markets in the first place. If he received an up-or-down vote here today, he would be approved in a minisecond, however long it takes to call the roll.

I have a couple of other examples. Yesterday we talked about the D.C. Circuit. By statute, the D.C. Circuit—some say the most important court in America, more important than the Supreme Court—has 11 spots. Justice Roberts went to the Supreme Court in 2005. His spot has not yet been filled. We have tried, but there have been two filibusters stopping that. There are four vacancies there.

President Obama is the first President in more than 50 years who has not had an appointment confirmed in the D.C. Circuit, but it is not because we have not tried. For example, we tried to get Caitlyn Halligan for 4 years, but her nomination has been filibustered twice. The seat she was nominated for—I repeat—was the seat vacated by Justice Roberts in 2005. Today it is 2013. Do the math.

Now Republicans have forced cloture on this nomination even though Sri Srinivasan was nominated for the D.C. Circuit a year ago. Even though it was reported out of the committee unanimously, they have decided to stall and not have a vote on it.

The nominee has wide bipartisan support, it appears, from both sides of the aisle. If it was reported out of the committee unanimously, I would assume that is the case. Neither stellar qualifications nor bipartisan support are enough to prevent Republican obstruction.

According to a report released this month by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, first-term judicial nominees who were reported out of committee unanimously have waited nine times longer to be confirmed than under President Bush. President Obama's first-term district court nominees have waited five times longer than those previously. The first-term circuit court nominees have waited more than seven times longer.

Yesterday the Republican leader raised the example of a Wyoming judge as proof they are willing to support some of our nominees. Wyoming—as I indicated yesterday, there may be a more Republican State in the Union, but I don't know where it is. I said, well, let's schedule a vote yesterday—Wednesday. The Republican leader said no.

It doesn't take a mathematician to figure why we have a judicial vacancy crisis in this country. We can talk about how we cleared most of the calendar. I take the Senate's charge to advise and consent very seriously, but Republicans have corrupted the Founders' intent by blocking qualified nominees for the slightest reason, if no reason.

President Obama deserves to choose his team, just as Davey Johnson deserves to choose his team. I believe any President deserves his or her team.

The Republicans have again and again delayed or obstructed the President's nominees. This Republican obstruction has created an unreasonable and unworkable standard where minor issues are raised as excuses to block major nominees or require a 60-vote supermajority for confirmation.

Before the Republican leader accuses me of going back on my word, he should take a long look in the mirror, and he should spend some time in honest reflection of Republican contributions to the gridlock threatening this storied institution before he claims "there is no real problem here."

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, according to the Congressional Research Service, President Obama has had his Cabinet nominees confirmed quicker than his predecessors during the same period in the second term—quicker.

I don't know what the majority leader thinks advise and consent means. Listening to him it means: Sit down, shut up, don't ask any questions, and confirm immediately. I don't think that is what the Founding Fathers had in mind.

Talk about manufacturing a problem—the Secretary of Energy, 97 to 0; the Secretary of Interior, 87 to 11; Secretary of the Treasury, 71 to 26; Office of Management and Budget, 96 to 0; Secretary of State, 94 to 3—in 7 days.

What we have just heard, I am afraid for my good friend the majority leader, in spite of the baseball analogy—and I read in the papers this morning he has been meeting with his members and trying to get 51 votes to blow the Senate up.

We have important issues coming down the pike. We want to finish the farm bill. We have been working hard to develop a broad bipartisan support for an immigration bill. We know what is going on here. What I fear is that the majority leader is working his way toward breaking his word to the Senate and to the American people, blowing up this institution, and making it extremely difficult for us to operate on the collegial basis we have operated on for over 200 years.

He wants to have no debate. Do what I say and do it now. This is the culture of intimidation we have seen at the IRS, HHS, FCC, SEC, and now here at the Senate: Do what I say when I say it. Sit down and shut up or we will change the rules. We will break the rules to change the rules.

We need to think over how we conduct ourselves in this body. The majority leader has a very important position. It is not only to lead the party of the majority, it is also to protect the institution. What I hear lacking in that speech is any interest whatsoever in protecting the traditions of this institution. What I hear is: We are going to get our way as rapidly as possible. You guys and gals, sit down and shut up. Don't ask too many questions; don't make it take a week longer. Do what we say, and if you don't, we will break the rules to change the rules. That is what this is about.

I want to make sure everybody understands where the majority leader is taking us. Make no mistake about it, the American people have given us divided government, but that doesn't mean they expect us not to accomplish things. We are on the cusp of beginning

an extremely important debate about the future of the country after the recess, but we know what is going on. What I hear is the majority leader does not want to keep his word to the Senate or to the American people. We will take that into consideration as we move forward.

With regard to this D.C. Circuit nomination—talk about a manufactured crisis. This well-qualified nominee came out of the committee unanimously. We have been operating on confirming judges on the basis of coming out of committee. So the majority leader decided that wasn't good enough and to do it now.

Yesterday I objected to that simply because—we did not have a problem here. We have been operating in a very collegial and sensible way. However, he has now manufactured something he can call a filibuster by filing cloture on a nominee we were prepared to confirm in an up-or-down vote in a week from now. So we ought to confirm him now.

Therefore, as I noted yesterday, Senate Republicans don't have a problem with an up-or-down vote on this pending nominee for the D.C. Circuit. Indeed, the day after his nomination appeared on the Executive Calendar for the first time, we offered to have an up-or-down vote on the nomination. The only thing we asked was that Members who did not serve on the Judiciary Committee have at least a reasonable amount of time to review his record. Unfortunately, the majority would not take yes for an answer.

Instead, it moved to set a 60-vote hurdle by filing cloture on the nomination the day after it first appeared on the calendar. It was heavyhanded, and, frankly, completely mystifying. As I said, the nomination had been on the Executive Calendar for barely a day, but we are not going to let the majority leader manufacture an obstruction crisis where none exists.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture vote scheduled for Executive Calendar No. 95 be vitiated; further, the Senate proceed to executive session at 1 p.m. today for the consideration of Calendar No. 95; there be 1 hour of debate equally divided in the usual form, and at the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to a vote on the confirmation of the nomination with no intervening action or debate, and that the President then be notified of Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am not going to have a long conversation this morning with my friend the Republican leader, other than to say this: My speech speaks for itself. I wrote it; no one else wrote it. It is my speech, and

I want everyone to look at that. I want Republicans and Democrats to look at it.

I also want the record to be clear: This man, on whom we are going to vote this afternoon at 1 p.m. or 2 p.m.—whatever time the consent agreement suggests—has been waiting 1 year. So the Republican leader can talk about how quickly it came, but this man has been waiting for a year. I went through the statistics, and I will not go over them again. I hope things work out in this Senate so we don't have to go through anymore procedural battles, but things are not working well. I went through the statistics, and they are in my speech.

I don't object.

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

The Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Let me make sure everybody understands where we are. Let's have no misunderstandings. What the majority leader is doing is trying to get 51 votes to break the rules of the Senate and change the rules of the Senate. We know what he is doing, and let's make no mistake what the stakes are: He is threatening this institution, which he elected, in part, to protect, by manufacturing a crisis that does not exist. As we all know, in the Senate every Senator has the ability to impact how we do business. Unanimous consent means exactly what it says, unanimous consent.

I hope the majority leader will think long and hard, and I hope my friends in the majority, who may some day be in the minority—I know there are a lot of new Democratic Senators who think that will never happen, but amazingly enough the American people do, from time to time, change their minds about who they want running the country. The shoe could be on the other foot, and we never know when. I could have the job the majority leader currently has.

I think we need to think long and hard about protecting this institution and its traditions, particularly manufacturing crises when they don't exist.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, prior to coming to Congress, I was a trial lawyer. I tried more than 100 cases to a jury. The jury decided what was right or wrong in the particular conflict, and I have the American people on my side with this conflict. They don't like what is going on in the Senate, and I have an obligation to protect the Senate. I know that, and my friend reminds me of that, and I think of it very often. I think of it every day and when I have my weekly caucus with my 54 Democratic Senators. I represent them to represent the people they represent. I represent, because the people they represent are Republicans, Democrats and Independents, and I understand that.

So I am willing to take this case to the American people. I hope we can resolve any problems we have, but it is not right what is going on. I submit my

case to the American people. I submit my case to the American people.

I don't know what he is talking about. I had a very early meeting this morning. I haven't read the newspaper. Maybe there is something in there I will have to deny. I don't know anything about the 51 votes. I look for 51 votes all the time on many different issues.

As I said, I don't want to have any animosity between me and my friend. He is a lawyer. I am a lawyer. He represents Kentucky. I represent Nevada. We both represent our respective caucuses and we both have an obligation to make this place work better.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader.

IRS AND OBAMACARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now I wish to talk about a real scandal and not a manufactured crisis.

Nearly 2 weeks have now passed since we learned about the scandal at the IRS. The more we learn, the more troubling it becomes. It is now clear this was about much more than one or two employees going rogue at some far-flung office out in the administrative hinterlands as was first suggested.

The facts we have seen so far point to something far more systemic than that, and it shouldn't surprise anybody. This is the IRS we are talking about—the IRS. This is an agency that is basically a euphemism for mind-numbing bureaucracy—the kind of place where one would assume nobody does much of anything without signatures and countersignatures from section chiefs and subsection chiefs and deputy office heads and secondary assistant deputy subassociate directors; sort of like a Kafka novel without the laughs.

So what we first heard always stretched credulity. Employees at ground zero of the Federal bureaucracy going rogue? Come on. Think back to the testimony we heard this week—or didn't hear. Why did Lois Lerner and other senior and former IRS officials refuse to address questions they had previously misled Congress? Somehow I doubt it is because they had nothing of interest to say. We will look forward to hearing more from them and we will look forward to hearing from whomever actually made the decisions that led to these abuses, since no one we have heard from yet is able to take responsibility for what went on.

Let's not forget the administration continues to give us different timelines about who knew what and when.

So the long and short of the situation is this: The public doesn't know the full story yet. A number of my constituents have shared stories with my office about the IRS auditing their organizations and businesses during the recent Presidential campaign for the first time ever. All of a sudden they get