

THE Skanner

Challenging People to Shape
a Better Future Now

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Opinion

FROM THE PUBLISHER:

Why Can't the Supreme Court Continue with Eight Justices?

In March 2016 former President Obama nominated Judge Merrick Garland to the US Supreme Court. Judge Garland is well respected and serves as chief judge of the Appeals Court of the District of Columbia. Yet despite past bipartisan support this nonpartisan judge was refused a hearing in Congress. Republican leaders decid-



Bernie Foster
Publisher

Court has been operating for nearly a year with eight members instead of nine and as far

“The Supreme Court was originally made up of six justices and at different points in time has been composed of seven, 10 and nine justices

ed to block Judge Garland's appointment simply because he was nominated by former President Obama.

As a result the Supreme

as we can see it has worked well. Now Democrats should continue what the Republicans started and push to keep an eight-justice Supreme

Court.

It is not without precedent. In fact the Supreme Court was originally made up of six justices and at different points in time has been composed of seven, 10 and nine justices. FDR wanted as many as 15 justices, but Congress, which sets the number refused to agree.

With its current eight members the Supreme Court has ruled that universities may consider race among other factors in their admissions process. The court also struck down unconstitutional abortion restrictions in Texas and upheld a decision restricting gun ownership for perpetrators of domestic violence.

The Supreme Court has

done well with eight justices — and if another justice should leave the court we have no doubt it will also work well with seven members. So why can't the court continue to work with its current eight justices.

Democrats are outnumbered in both the Senate and the House for at least the next four years, so they don't have a lot of power in this Congress. Nevertheless they can fight to keep the Supreme Court impartial by opposing any new Supreme Court appointments.

Sen. Mitch McConnell and his friends have demonstrated that the eight-justice court will work. So let's stick with it for the next session of Congress.

What do you think?

Don't Be Confused About Vanport

More than 370 people signed a petition at The Skanner Foundation's annual Martin Luther King Jr Breakfast saying that Delta Park should be renamed Vanport after the town that was destroyed in the great Vanport Flood of 1948.

The Skanner News has been at the forefront of efforts to commemorate the Vanport

Flood, through the North Portland Multimedia Training Center, a project of The Skanner Foundation.

The Skanner has supported public screenings of The Wake of Vanport, produced by the North Portland Multimedia Training Center, which included interviews with flood survivors.

The Skanner News also welcomes the contributions of

Vanport Mosaic, a separate community project that is producing a festival in May 2017 focused on the Vanport stories. We have had many calls confusing our work with theirs. We want to emphasize that while they started out working through The Skanner Foundation, they are now a completely separate organization with no affiliation to The Skanner News. We wish

them well.

The next screening of The Skanner Foundation's Wake of Vanport will be held March 2017. Subscribe to our breaking news and events email to learn more at www.theskanner.com. To sign an online petition to change the name of Delta Park to Vanport, go to www.change.org/p/portland-parks-recreation-change-delta-park-s-name-to-vanport.

To Be Equal: Assessing President Obama's Impact and Legacy

Throughout our history, the National Urban League has taken seriously our responsibility to hold the President of the United States accountable to the needs of urban America and communities of color. During the Great Depression, Executive Secretary Eugene Kinckle Jones served on President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Black Cabinet." Lester Granger, who headed the League during World War II, is among those credited with persuading President Harry Truman to desegregate the Armed Forces. Whitney M. Young advised presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson and was instrumental in the passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act. Urban League Presidents Vernon Jordan, John Jacob and Hugh Price continued our engagement with the Presidents with whom they served to further the work of civil rights and secure support for Urban League programs.

The first African American Presidency naturally has held special significance for the National Urban League. In recognition of Obama's unique place in American history, we set out to create a comprehensive analysis of



Marc H. Morial
National Urban League

his two terms, which we released earlier this week to great national interest.

Any evaluation of the

“Black Americans felt both the pride of President Obama's accomplishments and the pain when it was clear his opponents sought to diminish a great American

Obama administration must first recognize that he inherited the worst economy since the Great Depression, and was faced with Congressional opposition unprecedented in its intensity and sinister nature. Both his accomplishments and his failures must be evaluated against those conditions.

In creating our scorecard, the National Urban League harkened back to the famous question Ronald Reagan asked the nation during his sole debate against President Jimmy Carter: "Are you bet-

ter off than you were four years ago?" In this instance, the question is, "Is the nation better off than it was eight years ago?" And, "Is Black America better off than it was eight years ago?" The answer to both questions is, unequivocally, "Yes."

President Obama is leaving office with an approval rating even higher than Reagan's, exceeded only by Presidents

coverage, with the uninsured rate for African Americans cut by more than half.

Barack Obama's passion and steady hand made a huge difference in charting a progressive course and positively impacted the lives of ordinary Americans. Black Americans felt both the pride of his accomplishments and the pain when it was clear his opponents sought to diminish a great American.

While we scored many of the administration's achievements with our highest rating, "Superior," President Obama's tenure as a whole had shortcomings, due to some notable missed opportunities and outright failures, such as the economic development of urban centers, gun violence and the foreclosure rate and bank closure rate in communities of color and low-income neighborhoods. On these and other issues, we rated the Obama administration "Fair" or "Poor." Our evaluation springs from a consideration of his accomplishments balanced against the conditions under which he served. The National Urban League has given the Obama Administration an overall rating of "Excellent," our second-highest rating.