

GORSUCH: Conservative Coloradan judge in image of Scalia

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the right's most powerful voice on the high court.

With Scalia's wife, Maureen, sitting in the audience, Trump took care to praise the late justice. Gorsuch followed, calling Scalia a "lion of the law."

Gorsuch thanked Trump for entrusting him with "a most solemn assignment." Outlining his legal philosophy, he said: "It is the rule of judges to apply, not alter, the work of the people's representatives. A judge who likes every outcome he reaches is very likely a bad judge."

Some Democrats, still smarting over Trump's unexpected victory in the presidential election, have vowed to mount a vigorous challenge to nearly any nominee to what they view as the court's "stolen seat."

President Barack Obama nominated U.S. Circuit Court Judge Merrick Garland for the vacancy after Scalia's death, but Senate Republicans refused to consider the pick, saying the seat should be filled only after the November election.

Senate Democratic leader Charles Schumer said he has "serious doubts" that Gorsuch is within what Democrats consider the legal mainstream, saying he "hewed to an ideological approach to jurisprudence that makes me skeptical that he can be a strong, independent justice on the court."

Trump's choice of Gorsuch marks perhaps the most significant decision of his young presidency, one with ramifications that could last long after he leaves office. After a reality television buildup to Tuesday's announcement — including



AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster
President Donald Trump shakes hands with Judge Neil Gorsuch in East Room of the White House in Washington, Tuesday, as he announces Gorsuch as his nominee for the Supreme Court.

a senior Trump adviser saying more than one court candidate was heading to Washington ahead of the event—the actual reveal was traditional and drama-free.

For some Republicans, the prospect of filling one or more Supreme Court seats over the next four years has helped ease their concerns about Trump's experience and temperament.

Three justices are in their late 70s and early 80s, and a retirement would offer Trump the opportunity to cement conservative dominance of the court for many years.

Gorsuch would restore the court to the conservative tilt it held with Scalia on the bench. But he is not expected to call into question

high-profile rulings on abortion, gay marriage and other issues in which the court has been divided 5-4 in recent years.

If confirmed, Gorsuch would join the court that is often the final arbiter for presidential policy. Justices upheld Obama's signature health care law in 2012 and could eventually hear arguments over Trump's controversial refugee and immigration executive order.

Gorsuch's writings outside the court offer insight into his conservative leanings. He lashed out at liberals in a 2005 opinion piece for National Review, written before he became a federal judge.

"American liberals have become addicted to the courtroom, relying

on judges and lawyers rather than elected leaders and the ballot box, as the primary means for effecting their social agenda on everything from gay marriage to assisted suicide to the use of vouchers for private-school education," he wrote.

Gorsuch has won praise from conservatives for his defense of religious freedom, including in a case involving the Hobby Lobby craft stores. He voted in favor of privately held for-profit secular corporations, and individuals who owned or controlled them, who raised religious objections to paying for contraception for women covered under their health plans.

The judge also has written opinions that question 30 years of Supreme Court rulings that allow federal agencies to interpret laws and regulations. Gorsuch has said that federal bureaucrats have been allowed to accumulate too much power at the expense of Congress and the courts.

Like Scalia, Gorsuch identifies himself as a judge who tries to decide cases by interpreting the Constitution and laws as they were understood when written.

He also has raised questions about criminal laws in a way that resembles Scalia's approach to criminal law.

University of Michigan law professor Richard Primus said Gorsuch "may be the closest thing the new generation of conservative judges has to Antonin Scalia."

Gorsuch, like the other eight justices on the court, has an Ivy League law degree. The Colorado native earned his bachelor's degree

from Columbia University in three years, then a law degree from Harvard. He clerked for Supreme Court Justices Byron White, a fellow Coloradan, and Anthony Kennedy before earning a philosophy degree at Oxford University and working for a prominent Washington law firm.

He served for two years in George W. Bush's Department of Justice before Bush nominated him to the appeals court. His mother was Anne Gorsuch Burford, who was head of the Environmental Protection Agency in the Reagan administration.

Gorsuch was among the 21 possible choices for the court Trump released during the campaign. Other finalists also came from that list, including Thomas Hardiman, who serves alongside Trump's sister on the Philadelphia-based 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, and William Pryor, a federal appeals court judge and Alabama's attorney general from 1997 to 2004.

If Democrats decide to filibuster Gorsuch's nomination, his fate could rest in the hands of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. Trump has encouraged McConnell to change the rules of the Senate and make it impossible to filibuster a Supreme Court nominee — a change known in the Senate as the "nuclear option."

A conservative group already has announced plans to begin airing \$2 million worth of ads in support of the nominee in Indiana, Missouri, Montana and North Dakota, four states that Trump won and in which Democrats will be defending their Senate seats in 2018.

CHOLERA: Harvested birds can be eaten, but should be cooked thoroughly

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Avian cholera is a bacterial disease that spreads through bird-to-bird contact, ingestion of food or water containing the bacteria or by scavenging infected carcasses. The bacteria can survive in soil and water for up to four months, according to the USGS.

Humans are not at high risk of infection, though Reishus said people should avoid handling dead birds. Because the disease kills waterfowl so quickly,

Reishus said it is unlikely hunters have killed any sick birds. However, as a precaution, hunters should wear gloves when cleaning harvested ducks or geese and disinfect their waders and decoys to avoid spreading the bacteria.

Harvested birds can still be eaten, but should be cooked thoroughly, Reishus said. Hunting season for ducks and geese closed across the region on Sunday.

Reishus said avian cholera tends to hit areas

where ducks and geese are heavily concentrated. The Columbia Basin has always been a major wintering area for mallards, he said, and this year's colder-than-usual winter may be clustering birds even closer together than in years past.

ODFW is asking the public to report sick or dead birds by calling 1-866-968-2600 or email wildlife.health@state.or.us.

Contact George Plaven at 541-966-0825.

PARK: Hermiston currently without rec director

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to interview Monday. On the recreation side of things, Hermiston is currently missing its recreation director after Dan Earp left for a job at a larger parks department in Carson City, Nevada. Fetter said he received 32 qualified applications, however, and has narrowed them down to five applicants that he plans

the Hermiston Conference Center at 3 p.m., with a performance date of Feb. 25 at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. at Hermiston High School. Tickets will be available at the conference center or the parks and recreation department.

If parents are looking for more recreational opportunities for their children after being cooped up for so much of the winter, Fetter suggested they bring them to auditions for the Missoula Children's Theater production of "Princess and the Pea," sponsored by the Desert Arts Council. Auditions are Feb. 20 at

the Hermiston Conference Center at 3 p.m., with a performance date of Feb. 25 at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. at Hermiston High School. Tickets will be available at the conference center or the parks and recreation department.

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Democrats force delays in votes on three Cabinet nominees

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Democrats blocked committee votes on three of President Donald Trump's highest-profile Cabinet picks Tuesday as spiraling partisan hostility over the fledgling administration's refugee curbs and other initiatives seemed to seep into Congress' work on nominations.

In an unusual step, Democrats boycotted planned Senate Finance Committee votes on Rep. Tom Price, R-Ga., to become health secretary and financier Steven Mnuchin to head the Treasury Department. They accused both men of lying about their financial backgrounds, and since committee rules require at least one Democrat to be present, Republicans could not hold roll calls.

"He didn't tell the truth," the committee's top Democrat, Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon, said of reports that Price received preferential treatment in purchasing stock in a biotech company. "He misled the Congress and he misled the American people."

The tactic infuriated Republicans, even though the GOP boycotted a committee vote on Gina McCarthy to head the Environmental Protection Agency in 2013 when

Democrats ran the Senate. "They ought to stop posturing and acting like idiots," said committee Chairman Orrin Hatch, R-Utah. "Are they that bitter about Donald Trump? The answer has to be yes."

At the Senate Judiciary Committee, Democrats criticized Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., Trump's nominee for attorney general, in speeches that lasted as long as 30 minutes apiece.

After four-and-a-half hours, panel Chairman Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, adjourned the session and set a new meeting for Wednesday.

"He's been the fiercest, most dedicated defender in Congress of the Trump agenda," California's Dianne Feinstein, the senior Democrat on Judiciary, said of Sessions.

The clashes came as the opening days of the Trump administration have seen little of the honeymoon period new presidents usually experience. The chief battleground has been Trump's executive order temporarily blocking refugees worldwide and anyone from seven Muslim-majority nations.

With liberal groups pressing them to fight Trump and a brutal battle looming over his imminent

pick for the Supreme Court vacancy, Tuesday's delaying tactics let Democrats signal they will use their limited power as the congressional minority to hamper the GOP.

Republicans said they would try reconvening the Finance committee Wednesday to see if Democrats would cooperate. Hatch planned to discuss the standoff with Wyden.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., all but taunted Democrats in remarks to reporters. "It is time to get over the fact that they lost the election," he said. "The president is entitled to have his Cabinet appointments considered. None of this is going to lead to a different outcome."

Price, Mnuchin and Sessions still seem certain to win eventual Senate confirmation, and other nominees made progress.

The full Senate confirmed Elaine Chao to be transportation secretary, while committees advanced three other Trump picks, including wealthy GOP contributor Betsy DeVos to head the Education Department.

Price and Mnuchin have said they've done nothing wrong and Republican lawmakers have stood by them.

PENDLETON



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Another shovelful

Sam Larsen, 6, of Pendleton is followed by his father, Travis, as he shovels snow from the sidewalk in front of neighbors' houses on Northwest Fourth Street on Tuesday in Pendleton.

BRIEFLY

AP Source: Yates troubled that order disadvantaged Muslims

WASHINGTON (AP) — Acting Attorney General Sally Yates, fired by President Donald Trump, has told others she refused to enforce his executive order on refugees because she felt it was intended to disadvantage Muslims, according to a person familiar with her thinking.

Yates knew that her firing was likely, but she did not want to resign and leave the problem unresolved for another lawyer to deal with, according to the person, who is familiar with the situation but was not authorized to discuss it by name. The person spoke about Yates

to The Associated Press on Tuesday.

Trump fired Yates Monday night in an abrupt move that has sent a clear message to his future Cabinet about his tolerance for public dissent.

The president will soon have in place like-minded political appointees, not officials inherited from the Obama administration like Yates, who refused to allow the Justice Department to defend his immigration orders in court. And the Trump appointees surely will be less inclined to publicly disagree with him.

But his haste in firing a top holdover official, his spokesman's admonishment that career employees should "either get with the program or go" and Trump's comments about issues he

wants federal prosecutors to investigate all illustrate how he moves aggressively to ensure his directives are carried out, even at agencies like the Justice Department that cherish their independence.

Over the decades, there has "been respect for the independence of the Justice Department as a law enforcement agency," said Bill Baer, a high-ranking department official during the Obama administration. "There is reason for grave concern that the incoming president views the Justice Department just as another political weapon to go after people who disagree with him."

White House spokesman Sean Spicer said Yates was "rightfully removed" from "a position of leadership."