

Gorsuch prepares to join the Supreme Court

By SAM HANANEL
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Surrounded by family and his soon-to-be Supreme Court colleagues, Neil Gorsuch took the first of two oaths today as he prepared to take his seat on the court and restore its conservative majority.

The 49-year-old appeals court judge from Colorado is being sworn in after a bruising fight that saw Republicans change the rules for approving high court picks — over the fierce objection of Democrats.

The first ceremony took place privately in the Justices' Conference Room, with Chief Justice John Roberts administering the oath required by the Constitution. Gorsuch placed his hand on the family Bible held by his wife, Louise. His two daughters watched, along with all eight of the current justices and most of their spouses.

Also in attendance was Maureen Scalia, widow of the late Justice Antonin Scalia, and her eldest son Eugene, said court spokeswoman Kathy Arberg.

Later, Gorsuch will appear at a public White House ceremony, where Justice Anthony Kennedy is to administer a second oath in which Gorsuch will pledge to administer justice impartially and “do equal right to the poor and to the rich.” Gorsuch, who once clerked for Kennedy, will be the first member of the court to serve alongside his former boss.

Gorsuch will fill the nearly 14-month-old vacancy created after the death of Scalia, who anchored the court's conservative wing for nearly three decades before he died unexpectedly in February 2016. In nominating Gorsuch, Pres-

ident Donald Trump said he fulfilled a campaign pledge to pick someone in the mold of Scalia.

During 11 years on the federal appeals court in Denver, Gorsuch mirrored Scalia's originalist approach to the law, interpreting the Constitution according to the meaning understood by those who drafted it. Like Scalia, he is a gifted writer with a flair for turning legal jargon into plain language people can understand.

Gorsuch will be seated just in time to hear one of the biggest cases of the term: a religious rights dispute over a Missouri law that bars churches from receiving public funds for general aid programs.

His 66-day confirmation process was swift, but bitterly divisive. It saw Senate Republicans trigger the “nuclear option” to eliminate the 60-vote filibuster threshold for all future high court nominees. The change allowed the Senate to hold a final vote with a simple majority.

Most Democrats refused to support Gorsuch because they were still seething over the Republican blockade last year of President Barack Obama's pick for the same seat, Merrick Garland. Senate Republicans refused to even hold a hearing for Garland, saying a high court replacement should be up to the next president.

The White House swearing-in ceremony is a departure from recent history. Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan were both sworn in publicly at the Supreme Court. Former Justice John Paul Stevens has argued that holding the public ceremony at the court helps drive home the justice's independence from the White House.

IN THE KNOW

Some interesting facts about Gorsuch and the court:

- **He is the youngest nominee since Clarence Thomas**, who was 43 when confirmed in 1991.
- **The Colorado native went to high school in Washington, D.C.**, while his mother served as EPA administrator in the Reagan administration.
- **He's the sixth member of the court who attended Harvard Law School**; the other three got their law degrees from Yale.
- **Gorsuch credits a nun with teaching him how to write.** He and his family attend an Episcopal church in Boulder, though he was raised Catholic and attended Catholic schools as a child. He joins a court that has five Catholics and three Jews.
- **As an associate justice, Gorsuch will earn \$251,800 a year** — more than 15 percent higher than his \$217,600 salary as an appellate judge.
- **Gorsuch joins the ranks of justices who are millionaires.** He reported financial assets in 2015 worth at least \$3.2 million, according to his latest financial disclosure report.

Then-Supreme Court Justice nominee Judge Neil Gorsuch is seen on Capitol Hill in Washington in February.

AP Photo/Andrew Harnik



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Opponents aid visitors have RV options at nearby parks and campgrounds, including Bud's on U.S. Highway 101 in Gearhart.

Gearhart: Sewage, waste from trailers was another concern

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“My preference is not to have 20 trailers or 40 or 50 hotel units for 96 hours or whatever, if we go visiting we stay in a hotel, and people can do that as well,” resident Jeanne Mark said at the hearing. “They can go to an RV park and set up camp and visit their friends.”

Resident Lisa Cerveny said she came from a “family of RVers” but opposed the amendment to maintain the city's low population density and protect the town's “quiet ambiance.”

Sewage and waste from trailers was another concern of opponents.

City Councilors Dan Jesse, Sue Lorain and Kerry Smith supported the measure.

“I don't see a problem with occasionally grandpa going out and sleeping in the RV with his kids, and I don't see an enforcement issue if the permit is posted on the RV on the person's property,” Lorain said.

“I think it's happening more than many of us know or imagine,” Jesse said. “I'd rather have people do it legally rather than illegally, so I'd like to give people the opportunity to do the right thing and get the permit.”

Lone vote

Mayor Matt Brown was the lone vote against the revision.

“I've got some problems with it,” Brown said. “I just feel it doesn't go within the residential nature of Gearhart and the comprehensive plan,

and it's hard to prove there's a public need for it.”

Brown said he liked the ordinance “how it is” and saw a potential downside as a result of the code change.

“I don't know how widespread, but there could be negative impact,” he said.

A separate ordinance limiting RV public areas will be presented to the City Council at a future session, driven by a suggestion by Chief Bowman, who said at a winter council meeting he hopes to make the “no sleeping” portion of the city's ordinance enforceable.

Bowman proposed language prohibiting RVs “parked or standing on blocks, leveling supports, pop-outs displayed or open,” to enable enforcement.

Armory: Friends are holding off on a loan to purchase the building until after cleanup

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from former shooting ranges at armories statewide. The upstairs, where most events are held, was not affected by the basement, because there is no forced-air circulation system to distribute lead dust.

Davies said the Friends have made contact with a lead-certified painting company to use abrasion machines to remove the existing coat on the basement floor, which he added was likely dating back

to a former shooting range.

“It appears that's where the lead dust is coming from,” he said of the floor.

Davies said the Armory hopes to get a bid on the removal in the coming week, and to have the work done and the area cleaned this month. The Friends are holding off on a \$500,000 loan to purchase the building from current owner Craft3 until after the cleanup. The loan will also help modernize the Armory, which used to hold events with

several thousand people but currently has an occupancy of 750.

Davies said the volunteers fixing up the Armory sometimes have to laugh at all the issues and surprises they've had to deal with in the building, whether it was cleaning buried oil tanks and removing asbestos or cleaning lead contamination and repairing storm damage. “We're hoping that once we get the lead done, we don't get a swarm of locusts,” he said.

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