

Gorsuch sworn into Supreme Court

Restores narrow conservative majority

WASHINGTON (AP) — Justice Neil Gorsuch took his place in history Monday as the newest addition on the bench of the Supreme Court, restoring a narrow conservative majority and marking a much-needed political victory for President Donald Trump.

Gorsuch was sworn in during a sun-soaked ceremony in the Rose Garden, nearly 14 months after the seat was left vacant with the sudden death of Justice Antonin Scalia. The oath was administered during the White House ceremony by Justice Anthony Kennedy, whom Gorsuch once served as a law clerk. A smiling Trump stood behind his nominee.

It was the second of two oaths — the first was conducted privately in the Justices' Conference Room by Chief Justice John Roberts.

"To the Scalia family, I won't ever forget that the seat I inherit today is that of a very, very great man," Gorsuch said to the audience of family and administration staffers, as well as all the sitting Supreme Court justices.

"I will do all my powers permit to be a faithful servant of the Constitution and laws of this great nation," he said.

Gorsuch joins the court that is often the final arbiter for presidential policy.

Speaking ahead of Gorsuch at the ceremony, Trump said that "our country is counting on you to be wise, impartial and fair, to serve under our laws, not over them, and to safeguard the right of the people to govern their own affairs," hinting at his own friction with the judiciary.

Gorsuch's confirmation was a badly needed boost for an administration riddled with controversy and misstep. Trump failed to get enough Republicans on board to support his plan to repeal and replace President Barack Obama's signature health care bill. His efforts to build a physical border wall with Mexico remain uncertain and his attempts to ban certain travelers from entering the U.S. because they pose a security threat have been blocked by the courts.

Trump was lighthearted about his win, saying that Gorsuch's nomination



AP Photo/Evan Vucci
President Donald Trump watches as Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy administers the judicial oath to Judge Neil Gorsuch during a re-enactment in the Rose Garden of the White House in Washington, Monday. Holding the bible is Gorsuch's wife Marie Louise Gorsuch.

came during his first 100 days and added: "You think that's easy?"

Trump said Americans would see in Gorsuch "a man who is deeply faithful to the Constitution of the United States" and predicted greatness for the 49-year-old former appeals court judge from Colorado.

Gorsuch said he was humbled by his ascendance to the nation's high court and thanked his former law clerks, saying of his former law clerks, "your names are etched in my heart forever."

Scalia had anchored the court's conservative wing for nearly three decades before he died unexpectedly in February 2016. In nominating Gorsuch, Trump said he fulfilled a campaign pledge to pick someone in the mold of Scalia.

Gorsuch is the youngest nominee since Clarence Thomas, who was 43 when confirmed in 1991.

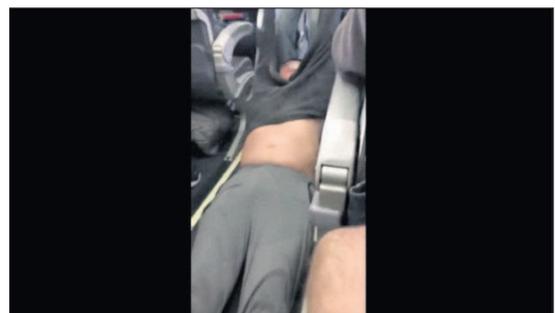
His 66-day confirmation process was swift, but bitterly divisive. It saw Senate Republicans trigger the "nuclear option" to eliminate the 60-vote filibuster threshold for Gorsuch and all future high court nominees. The change allowed the Senate to hold a final vote to approve Gorsuch with a simple majority.

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.

For now, Gorsuch restores the court's conservative tilt. But the new Senate rules allowing for confirmation of a justice by a simple majority will be crucial if Trump gets to fill another opening and replace either Kennedy — often a swing vote — or one of the court's liberal justices.

Kennedy and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg are both in their 80s and Justice Stephen Breyer is 78, raising concern among Democrats that Trump may have another opportunity to move the court in a more definitive conservative direction.

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



Audra D. Bridges via AP
This April 9 image made from a video provided by Audra D. Bridges shows a passenger being removed from a United Airlines flight in Chicago.

Video of passenger getting dragged off flight sparks uproar

CHICAGO (AP) — Video of police officers dragging a passenger from an overbooked United Airlines flight sparked an uproar Monday on social media, but United's CEO defended his employees, saying they followed proper procedures and had no choice but to call authorities and remove the man.

As the flight waited to depart from Chicago's O'Hare Airport, officers could be seen grabbing the screaming man from a window seat, pulling him across the armrest and dragging him down the aisle by his arms. United was trying to make room for four employees of a partner airline on the Sunday evening flight to Louisville, Kentucky.

Other passengers on Sunday night's United Express Flight 3411 are heard saying, "Please, my God," "What are you doing?" "This is wrong," "Look at what you did to him" and "Busted his lip."

Passenger Audra D. Bridges posted the video on Facebook. Her husband, Tyler Bridges, said United offered \$400 and then \$800 vouchers and a hotel stay for volunteers to give up their seats. When no one volunteered, a United manager came on the plane and announced that passengers would be chosen at random.

"We almost felt like we were being taken hostage," Tyler Bridges said. "We were stuck there. You can't do anything as a traveler. You're relying on the airline."

Oscar Munoz, CEO of United Airlines' parent company, apologized first in a written statement and then in a letter to employees Monday evening.

Munoz said he was "upset to see and hear about what happened" at O'Hare. He added, however, that the

man dragged off the plane had ignored requests by crew members to leave and became "disruptive and belligerent," making it necessary to call airport police.

"Our employees followed established procedures for dealing with situations like this," Munoz told employees. "While I deeply regret this situation arose, I also emphatically stand behind all of you, and I want to commend you for continuing to go above and beyond to ensure we fly right."

Munoz said that the airline might learn from the experience, and it was continuing to look into the incident.

The flight was operated for United by Republic Airline, which United hires to fly United Express flights. Munoz said four Republic employees approached United's gate agents after the plane was fully loaded and said they needed to board. He said the airline asked for volunteers to give up their seats, and then moved to involuntary bumping, offering up to \$1,000 in compensation.

The passenger who refused to leave told the manager that he was a doctor who needed to see patients in the morning, Tyler Bridges said.

The AP was unable to confirm the passenger's identity.

Two officers tried to reason with the man before a third came aboard and pointed at the man "basically saying, 'Sir, you have to get off the plane,'" Bridges said. That's when the altercation happened.

One officer involved has been placed on leave, the Chicago Aviation Department said.

After a three-hour delay the flight took off without the man aboard, Bridges said. A United employee apologized.

Wells claws back \$75 million from top execs in sales scandal

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The problems at Wells Fargo and its overly aggressive sales culture date back at least 15 years, and management had little interest in dealing with the issue until it spiraled out of control resulting in millions of accounts being opened fraudulently, according to an investigation by the company's board of directors.

The bank's board also clawed back another \$75 million in pay from two former executives, CEO

John Stumpf and community bank executive Carrie Tolsted, saying both executives dragged their feet for years regarding problems at the second-largest U.S. bank. Both were ultimately unwilling to accept criticism that the bank's sales-focused business model was failing.

The 110-page report has been in the works since September, when Wells acknowledged that its employees opened up to 2 million checking and credit card accounts without customers' authorization. Trying to meet unnaturally

high sales goals, Wells employees even created phony email addresses to sign customers up for online banking services.

"(Wells' management) created pressure on employees to sell unwanted or unneeded products to customers and, in some cases, to open unauthorized accounts," the board said in its report.

Many current and former employees have talked of intense and constant pressure from managers to sell and open accounts, and some said it pushed them into unethical behavior.

Monday's report backs up those employees' stories.

The report also says that problems in the bank's sales culture date back to at least 2002, far earlier than what the bank had previously said.

And that Stumpf knew about sales problems at a branch in Colorado since at least that year.

The bank has already paid \$185 million in fines to federal and local authorities and settled a \$110 million class-action lawsuit. The scandal also resulted in the abrupt retirement last October of Stumpf.

BRIEFLY

9 life sentences in case on Charleston church slayings

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — Convicted Charleston church shooter Dylann Roof was given nine consecutive life sentences in prison after he pleaded guilty to state murder charges Monday, leaving him to await execution in a federal prison and sparing his victims and their families the burden of a second trial.

Judge J.C. Nicholson imposed the sentences following a hearing in which church members and Roof's grandfather testified about the personal toll of the case.

The self-avowed white supremacist entered his guilty pleas while standing at the defense table with his attorneys, clad in a gray and white striped jail jumpsuit and handcuffed to a chain at his waist.

Roof's plea deal with state prosecutors, who also had been pursuing the death penalty, came in exchange for a life prison sentence on the state charges.

Solicitor Scarlett Wilson called the plea deal "an insurance policy for the federal conviction." With a new administration in Washington, Wilson said she's more confident that a federal death sentence will be carried out.

Wilson also praised the Charleston community for rising above the tragedy and called Roof's plan to start a race war "an epic failure."

Before sentencing Roof,

Nicholson heard members of historically black Emanuel AME Church describe the toll the June 2015 shooting took on them and their community.

Governor resigns, pleads guilty to misdemeanors

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Gov. Robert Bentley resigned Monday rather than face impeachment and pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor campaign violations that arose during the investigation of alleged affair with a top aide.

The mild-mannered 74-year-old Republican and one-time Baptist deacon was at peace with the decision to step down, according to a former administration member who was not authorized to release the information.

The sex-tinged scandal gathered force over the past few days and turned up on the pressure by opening impeachment hearings Monday. Last week, the Alabama Ethics Commission cited evidence that Bentley broke state ethics and campaign laws and referred the matter to prosecutors.

In a court hearing, Bentley appeared sullen and looked down at the floor as he pleaded guilty to misdemeanor charges of failing to file a major contribution report and converting campaign contributions to personal use.

EAST OREGONIAN Hermiston Herald

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