



US President Donald Trump walks through the Cross Hall to the East Room to nominate Neil M. Gorsuch to take Justice Antonin Scalia's vacancy on the US Supreme Court during an event at the White House on Jan 31, in Washington, DC. President Donald Trump nominated federal appellate judge Neil Gorsuch as his Supreme Court nominee, tilting the balance of the court back in the conservatives favor. (AFP)

Politics

Bitter, months-long fight looms

Senate's GOP united, Dems skeptical of Trump court pick

WASHINGTON, Feb 1, (AP): Senate Republicans stood united behind President Donald Trump's nomination of Judge Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court, bracing for a bitter, months-long fight with Democrats over a conservative judge similar in philosophy to the late Justice Antonin Scalia.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Kentucky, immediately praised Gorsuch, a Denver-based judge on the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, saying he "has an impressive background and a long record of faithfully applying the law and the Constitution." One after the other, Senate Republicans echoed the leader, describing Gorsuch as a well-qualified jurist.



Gorsuch

If confirmed, the 49-year-old Gorsuch would be the youngest justice on the court and could be shaping decisions for decades.

Democrats signaled they will challenge the choice, insisting that Gorsuch, the Ivy League-educated son of a former Reagan Cabinet official, prove to them he is a mainstream nominee. Democrats are still furious with the way Republicans treated former president Barack Obama's nominee for the open seat last year, refusing to even grant a hearing or a vote to Judge Merrick Garland in Obama's final year in office.

Instead, the seat remained empty for 10 months and the court operated with eight justices as McConnell maintained that the next president should make the nomination.

"This is a stolen seat being filled by an illegitimate and extreme nominee, and I will do everything in my power to stand up against this assault on the court," said Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Oregon.

Merkley suggested Monday, before the nominee was announced, that he will hold up the nomination and force Republicans to find 60 votes for confirmation. Republicans hold a 52-48 majority.

Senate Democratic Leader Charles Schumer hasn't officially said whether he would back a filibuster, the procedural maneuver that would require 60 votes. But he said after the nomination was announced that the Senate "must insist" on 60 votes, meaning McConnell will need bipartisan support. And any senator can move to filibuster.

Democrats are under intense pressure from liberal groups and the party base to challenge every

Trump nominee. As the nomination was announced, hundreds were protesting at Schumer's Brooklyn home, pressuring him to vote against Cabinet picks and block the Supreme Court nominee.

Like Merkley, a handful of Democrats came out in immediate opposition to Gorsuch. Massachusetts Sen Elizabeth Warren, who said Gorsuch has sided with large companies over workers, and Ohio Sen Sherrod Brown, who said Gorsuch's rulings haven't favored American workers or women's rights. Brown and Warren are up for re-election in 2018.

Warren's Massachusetts colleague, Democratic Sen Ed Markey, also said he will oppose Gorsuch. Oregon Sen Ron Wyden indicated he would as well, citing Gorsuch's stand against laws that allow terminally ill people to end their lives.

Schumer is in a tough position as he decides how to move forward. As liberal groups and Democratic voters angry about Trump's election victory press him to lead the loyal opposition, he must also be mindful of 23 Democrats and two independents up for re-election in 2018, including 10 in states won by Trump.

Some of those senators could face blowback from voters who see Democrats as obstructing Trump's pick. And some might decide to vote for Gorsuch.

Sen Joe Manchin, D-West Virginia, said he had little sympathy for fellow Senate Democrats feeling pressure to support Trump's nominee because they're running for re-election in 2018 in states that Trump won. Manchin is among those up for re-election in 2018.

"I didn't come here to say, 'Oh my goodness, if I don't do this, I might not get re-elected,'" Manchin said Wednesday on MSNBC's "Morning Joe." He said he will examine Gorsuch's record and make "a determination of whether to provide my consent."

Several other Democrats were also noncommittal.

Montana Sen Jon Tester, a Democrat up for re-election next year in the Republican-leaning state, said he looks forward to "sitting down with Judge Gorsuch, looking him in the eye, asking him tough questions, and finding out if he shares our Montana values."

McConnell said he hoped all senators — Democrats included — show Gorsuch fair consideration and respect the outcome of the presidential election "with an up-or-down vote on his nomination, just like the Senate treated the four first-term nominees of Presidents Clinton and Obama."

America

31% Americans OK ban: Imposing a temporary travel ban on citizens from seven Muslim countries, President Donald Trump said the move would help protect the United States from terrorism. But less than one-third of Americans believe the move makes them "more safe," according to a Reuters/Ipsos opinion poll released on Tuesday.

The Jan. 30-31 poll found roughly one in two Americans backed the ban, which also suspends admission of all refugees for 120 days, although there were sharp divisions along party lines.

Trump has pushed back against critics who say the travel ban targets Muslims. He says the "extreme vetting" is necessary to protect the country and its borders.

"This is not about religion," Trump said in a statement after announcing the travel ban on Friday. "This is about terror and keeping our country safe." In the Reuters/Ipsos poll some 31 percent of people said the ban made them feel "more safe," while 26 percent said it made them feel "less safe." Another 33 percent said it would not make any difference and the rest said they don't know.

Trump's executive order blocked citizens from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen and placed an indefinite ban on Syrian refugees.

Some Republican lawmakers criticized Trump's order and said it could backfire by giving terrorist organizations a new recruitment message.

"This executive order sends a signal, intended or not, that America does not want Muslims coming into our country," senators John McCain of Arizona and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina said in a joint statement.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll found that 49 percent of Americans agreed with the order and 41 percent disagreed. Some 53 percent of Democrats said



McCain

they "strongly disagree" with Trump's action while 51 percent of Republicans said they "strongly agree."

Democrats were more than three times as likely as Republicans to say that the "US should continue to

take in immigrants and refugees," and Republicans were more than three times as likely as Democrats to agree that "banning people from Muslim countries is necessary to prevent terrorism."

Cheryl Hoffman, 46, of Sumerduck, Virginia said she was thrilled that Trump ordered the ban.

"I understand that the country was founded on immigrants," said Hoffman, who participated in the poll. "Please, I get that. But I'm worried that refugees are coming in and being supported by my tax dollars."

Another poll respondent, Veronica Buetel, 57, of Green, Ohio felt just the opposite: "Yes, we do live in scary times, but there are other, better ways to root out terrorism." (RTRS)

Gabbard to shoulder trip: Hawaii Rep Tulsi Gabbard said Tuesday she will personally cover the cost of her recent trip to Syria.

Gabbard, a Democrat, met with Syrian President Bashar Assad while on the trip.

A release sent out by her office late Tuesday said she will reimburse a group called AACCESS-Ohio, or the Arab American Community Center for Economic and Social Services, for the

expenses "because it has become a distraction."

She said the important issue at hand is whether Americans "want their taxpayer dollars to continue to be used in support of militant groups" that she said are working with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group to overthrow the Syrian government.

Critics had questioned the source of funding for the trip, and little is known about the group.

Gabbard has come under intense criticism for meeting with Assad. But she said there's no possibility of a via-

ble peace agreement unless Assad is part of the conversation.

Lawmakers have accused the Assad government of war crimes and even genocide as the number of people killed during the violence in Syria continues to mount.

The war, now in its sixth year, has killed hundreds of thousands of people, contributed to Europe's worst refugee crisis since World War II and given the Islamic State group room to grow into a global terror threat.

Rebel groups in Syria are bitter over a string of territorial losses, including

last month's defeat in Aleppo, Syria's largest city. Russia, with its massive air power, and Iran, with thousands of Shiite militiamen in Syria, turned the war unequivocally in Assad's favor.

Gabbard said her trip included stops in Aleppo and Damascus, Syria's capital. She also visited Beirut during the trip, which began in mid-January.

Gabbard said she also met with refugees, Syrian opposition leaders, widows and family members of Syrians fighting alongside groups like al-Qaeda, and Syrians aligned with the Assad regime. (AP)

Mohamed Naser Al-Hajery & Sons debuts its new-look Häagen-Dazs branch in The Avenues



Mohamed Naser Al-Hajery & Sons, the exclusive Häagen-Dazs dealer in Kuwait, unveiled the renovated Häagen-Dazs branch in The Avenues, phase II at the ground floor, while adding new ice cream creations, juices and other scrumptious choices to its menu. The new branch was designed and implemented by "Sparks" international which meets the highest international standards. The event was held in the presence of employees of Mohamed Naser Al-Hajery & Sons, along with media delegates who savoured the new offerings of mouth-watering ice cream and juices flavours.

Häagen-Dazs has been making quality ice cream like no other since 1961. The world's best-tasting ice cream is created in 24 flavours and from the best ingredients that are carefully selected from around the world. Every flavour from Häagen-Dazs starts with 100% real cream, milk, free-range eggs, and sugar — simple ingredients for a creamy, intense, and tasty ice cream.



The founder, Reuben Mattus' vision was to create the best ice cream in the world using high quality, carefully selected ingredients. Reuben believed that if you were going to indulge in ice cream, it should be a real and fulfilling experience rather than the 'cold and sweet stuff' of his time. Reuben's ambition was to create the world's best-tasting ice cream and his devotion to the highest standards changed the way people thought about ice cream. The Häagen-Dazs philosophy remains the same to this day. We believe that everyone deserves to experience pleasure that is fulfilling and real and this guides everything we do. It's worth noting that Häagen-Dazs ice cream selection is available at 950 stores in more than 80 countries around the world. In Kuwait, Mohamed Naser Al-Hajery & Sons opened the first branch of Häagen-Dazs in 2000 in Souk Sharq, and today the company owns 5 branches that are perfectly situated in prime malls; Souk Sharq, Arraya Center, Al Hamra Tower, The Avenues and The Gate Mall.

