
A S S O C I A T E D B A P T I S T P R E S S

Phone: (904) 262-6626 Fax: (904) 262-7745 CServe: 70420,73

July 29, 1993

IN THIS ISSUE:

- * Supreme Court nominee receives committee approval
- * Committee votes to codify policy on gays in military
- * Senate OKs D.C. bill funding abortions
- * Wife of retired SBC leader, Velma Scott Sullivan, dies

Supreme Court nominee receives
unanimous committee approval

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The Senate Judiciary Committee voted unanimously July 29 to recommend that the full Senate confirm Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg as the 107th justice and second woman to sit on the Supreme Court.

Ginsburg is the first Democratic nominee to the U.S. Supreme Court in a quarter of a century. If confirmed by the full Senate, she will replace retired Justice Byron White.

Ginsburg, 60, has served on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia -- often called the nation's second highest court -- since nominated by President Jimmy Carter in 1980.

Judiciary Committee chairman Joseph Biden, D-Del., said that Ginsburg was one of the "brightest nominees" to come before the committee in the nearly 20 years he has been on it.

Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., praised President Bill Clinton for basing his selection on a nominee's competence, rather than her ideology, thereby resisting the temptation to politicize the nomination process.

Judge Ginsburg "claims to have no agenda but justice, and I believe her," Leahy said.

Republican committee members noted they are likely to disagree with some of the philosophies of a Democratic nominee but that the president deserved some deference in the matter as long as the nominee was well qualified.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, said he found some aspects of Ginsburg's testimony during confirmation hearings very disturbing.

"For example," Hatch said, "her view that a right to abortion could be based on the Equal Protection Clause is, I believe, ultimately untenable."

"I do not expect to agree with any nominee, especially one chosen by a

president of the other party, on every issue that may come before the

judicial branch," Hatch continued. "Here, Judge Ginsburg's long record of, on balance, restrained and responsible judging is sufficient to outweigh the genuine concerns that have arisen."

Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., expressed displeasure that Ginsburg was not more responsive to some constitutional questions. He said she ranks second out of eight nominees (since 1981) in lack of responsiveness.

If confirmed, Ginsburg would be expected to help solidify the court's center.

Clinton said he nominated Ginsburg because of her distinguished record as a judge, her pioneering work on behalf of women, and what he predicted will be her ability to be a "force for consensus-building" on the court.

James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee, said Ginsburg's First Amendment views are encouraging.

"Given some of her writings as an appeals-court judge, we are hopeful that she will bring fairness to the court as a centrist who has a high regard for religious liberties."

During the 1970s, Ginsburg argued six women's-rights cases before the Supreme Court and won five of them.

Ginsburg said her nomination is significant "because it contributes to the end of the days when women, at least half the talent pool in our society, appear in high places only as one-at-a-time performers."

Ginsburg, the first person to be a member of both the Harvard and Columbia Law Reviews, tied for the top spot in her Columbia Law School class. In 1977, she was named by Time magazine as one of 10 outstanding U.S. law professors.

Her nomination received the highest possible rating of the American Bar Association -- a unanimous judgment by a 15-member panel that she is "well qualified" for the highest bench in the land. That ABA rating means the nominee is among the best available for appointment.

No one has ever failed to be confirmed after receiving such a high rating.

-30-

Committee votes to codify
policy on gays in military

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The Senate Armed Services Committee approved a bill July 23 that would write into law major components of the administration's new policy on homosexuals in the military.

Included in the \$262 billion National Defense Authorization Act, the proposal makes conduct, not sexual orientation, the test for the policy on gays in the military.

Like the administration's policy announced July 19, the Senate bill would require military personnel who are homosexuals to refrain from revealing that fact and from engaging in homosexual activity.

It also says that the practice of not asking potential military

recruits about sexual orientation -- ordered by President Bill Clinton six months ago -- should continue. The measure did stipulate that the secretary of defense may reinstate the questioning if the secretary deems it necessary.

The measure, approved 17-5, defines homosexuality and states that it has a negative effect on the military: "The presence in the armed forces of persons who demonstrate a propensity or intent to engage in homosexual acts would create an unacceptable risk to the high standards or morale, good order and discipline, and unit cohesion that are the essence of military capability."

Sen. Dan Coats, R-Ind., said the clear definitions and acknowledgement of the harmful effects of homosexuals on the military makes the bill a stronger proposal.

"The strength of this proposal is twofold," he said. "It is strong enough to withstand a court challenge, and it is flexible enough to give commanders the ability to build the morale of their units."

"This policy is characterized by legal clarity and realism about the unique demands of military life."

The bill, as well as Clinton's policy, reflects many of concerns raised by committee chairman Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) when the president announced in January he was going to lift the ban. Clinton seemed to recognize those concerns, saying his policy strikes a "sensible balance" between the rights of individuals and the needs of the military.

Clinton called his policy "an honorable compromise that advances the cause of people who are called to serve our country by their patriotism, the cause of our national security and our national interest in resolving an issue that has divided our military and our nation and diverted our attention from other matters for too long."

The committee action seemed to signal that Congress will not try to reverse the president's new order as it may have done if Clinton had completely lifted the long-time ban.

-30-

Senate OKs D.C. bill
funding abortions

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Senate approved a spending bill July 27 that permits the District of Columbia to pay for abortions for poor women.

The measure, part of the District budget for fiscal year 1994, would reverse a position Congress took in 1988. The budget was approved 70 to 29; the U.S. House of Representatives previously approved a similar bill by only two votes (213-211).

The District will not be able to use federal money to pay for abortions, but the measure permits it to use local money. A law, known as the Hyde amendment, prohibits the use of federal funds for abortions.

The Senate also followed the House by rejecting a provision for an insurance program for city workers that would have allowed unmarried employees to designate a "domestic partner" for coverage on their policies. Opponents say the measure was an attempt to legitimize homosexuality.

The bill will go to a House-Senate conference committee, which will iron out the differences in the two bills.

-30-

-- By Pam Parry

Wife of retired SBC leader,
Velma Scott Sullivan, dies

NASHVILLE (ABP) -- Velma Scott Sullivan, 80, wife of James Sullivan, retired Southern Baptist Sunday School Board president, died at her home in Nashville, Tenn., July 29 after a lengthy illness.

A native of Crystal Springs, Miss., she was married in 1935 to James Sullivan, who led the Sunday School Board from 1953 to 1975. Sullivan said two of his wife's contributions were "to preschool children and young wives, helping build strong Christian homes."

Herschel Hobbs, pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, Okla., and a lifelong friend of the Sullivans, described Velma Sullivan as "one of the finest Christian women I ever knew. She was deeply spiritual and had a brilliant personality to go with it. I count it a blessing to have known her."

In addition to her husband, she is survived by their three children: Mary Beth Taylor of Nashville, an employee of the board; Martha Lynn Porch of Tullahoma, Tenn., wife of James Porch, the executive director of the Tennessee Baptist Convention; and James David Sullivan of Oxford, Miss.

She is also survived by seven grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and two sisters, Edith Wells of Columbus, Miss., and Bettye Fuselier of Pittsfield, Mass.

-30-

***** END *****