News



Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg lies in state in Statuary Hall of the U.S. Capitol in Washington on Friday, Sept. 25, 2020. (Shawn Thew/Pool via AP)

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The late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg lay in state Friday at the U.S. Capitol, the first woman so honored in America, making history again as she had throughout her extraordinary life.

The flag-draped casket of Ginsburg, who died last week at 87, drew members of Congress, military officials, friends and family, some with children in tow, to the Capitol's grand Statuary Hall to pay respect to the liberal icon who changed American law and perceptions of women's power. Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden and his wife, Jill, sat quietly with other invited guests. His vice presidential running mate, Sen. Kamala Harris also attended.

Harris said RBG, as the late justice is known by many, “absolutely” and intentionally cleared a path for women like her in civic life.

“She, first of all, made America see what leadership looks like — in the law, in terms of public service — and she broke so many barriers,” Harris told reporters at the Capitol. “And I know that she did it intentionally knowing that people like me could follow.”

She called Ginsburg “one of the greatest Americans.”

Mourners gathered under coronavirus restrictions for the service for Ginsburg amid a Capitol in turmoil. President Donald Trump is prepared to announce a conservative nominee to replace the justice on Saturday, weeks before the election. A Senate confirmation vote is expected in late October.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said it was with “profound sorrow” that she welcomed the liberal icon and opened the private service.

She and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer welcomed Ginsburg’s casket her casket made the short procession from the court’s steps where it had been on public view for several days to the East Front of the Capitol. A military honor guard carried it inside the Capitol’s stately Statuary Hall. It departed a few hour later, female lawmakers on the Capitol steps, waving goodbye.



A joint services military team places the flag-draped casket of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg as she lies in state at National Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol on Friday, Sept. 25, 2020. Ginsburg died at the age of 87 on Sept. 18 and is the first women to lie in state at the Capitol. (Greg Nash/Pool via AP)

Ginsburg, the second woman to serve on the Supreme Court, will be buried next week in Arlington National Cemetery beside her husband, Martin, who died in 2010.

The politics of the moment, in a tense election year, have rippled through the Ginsburg commemorations this week. But Friday's ceremony focused on her life and work, with musical selections from one of her favorite opera singers, mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves. She is the first Jewish American to lie in state at the Capitol.

Small in stature, large in history, the Brooklyn-born Ginsburg was remembered as a bright Columbia graduate who was passed over for jobs at a time when few women entered law, only to go on to reshape the nation's laws protecting women's rights and equality.

“Brick by brick, case by case,” said Rabbi Lauren Holtzblatt of the Adas Israel Congregation in Washington, she changed the course of American law.

“Today, she makes history again,” the rabbi said.

Few Republicans attended the service that was filled with women and Democrats. Sens. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, both former presidential contenders, were among those attending.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who is leading the push for Trump’s nominee to replace Ginsburg, was invited but noticeably missing. The GOP whip, Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana, was there.

Services were brief, with the rabbi’s reflections and prayer, before guests lined up to pass by the casket and pay their respects.

Toward the end of the line of mourners, one dropped to the ground and did three quick pushups. It was Bryant Johnson, the justice’s beloved trainer of her popular workouts.

Members of the House and Senate who were not invited to the ceremony because of space limitations imposed by the coronavirus pandemic will be able to pay their respects before a motorcade carrying Ginsburg’s casket departs the Capitol early afternoon.

The honor of lying in state has been accorded fewer than three dozen times, mostly to presidents, vice presidents, and members of Congress. Rep. John Lewis, the civil rights icon, was the most recent person to lie in state following his death in July. Henry Clay, the Kentucky lawmaker who served as Speaker of the House and also was a senator, was the first in 1852. Rosa Parks — a private citizen, not a government official — is the only woman who has lain in honor, a separate commemoration, at the Capitol.

Ginsburg had lain in repose for two days at the Supreme Court, where thousands of people paid their respects outside, including President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump on Thursday. Spectators booed and chanted “vote him out” as the president, who wore a mask, stood silently near Ginsburg’s casket at the top of the court’s front steps.

Trump plans to announce his nomination Saturday of a woman to take Ginsburg’s place on the high court, where she served for 27 years and was the leader of the liberal justices.