News

Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson, a federal appeals court judge, smiles during a

Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson, a federal appeals court judge, smiles during a meeting with Sen. Gary Peters, D-Mich., on Capitol Hill in Washington March 31, 2022. (CNS/Reuters/Jonathan Ernst)



Carol Zimmermann

View Author Profile

Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Washington — April 5, 2022

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson's nomination to the Supreme Court moved forward April 4 after a 53-47 Senate procedural vote to bring her nomination before the full Senate likely before April 8.

The vote followed a deadlocked vote of 11-11 by the Senate Judiciary Committee earlier in the day with the 22 members voting along party lines.

By that evening, Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, and Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, said they would support Jackson's nomination, joining Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, who

previously announced she would back the nominee.

A simple majority of 51 votes is needed for Jackson's confirmation. With Democrats already saying they will support her, and now three Republicans joining them, the nominee appears to have narrowly gained the support needed to become the next Supreme Court justice.

The Senate Judiciary Committee spent more than three hours debating Jackson's nomination April 4, going over points they made during their questioning of the judge who was confirmed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit less than a year ago after serving nearly eight years as a federal trial court judge in Washington.

The committee's vote was delayed by the absence of Sen. Alex Padilla, D-Calif., whose flight to Washington had been diverted due to a medical emergency. He arrived late in the afternoon to cast his vote.

Republican members continued their criticism of Jackson, saying she was soft on crime and had not revealed her judicial philosophy, while Democrats emphasized Jackson's qualifications for the role and the historic opportunity of confirming the nomination of the first Black woman on the Supreme Court.

Advertisement

During the week of confirmation hearings before the Senate committee in late March, Jackson said that as a federal judge she has always taken seriously her responsibility to be independent.

She also said it was "extremely humbling" to be considered for Justice Stephen Breyer's seat on the court and added that she "could never fill his shoes," but if she were confirmed, she hoped she would "carry on his spirit."

Jackson was asked a few times March 22 about her abortion views. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., asked Jackson, as she has asked the past three court nominees, if Roe v. Wade, the court's 1973 decision legalizing abortion nationwide, was settled law. Jackson, as other nominees before her have done, agreed the court's decision was a binding precedent.

Later when she was asked by Sen. John Kennedy, R-La., if she has a personal belief on when life begins, she said she did.

"I have a religious belief that I set aside when I am ruling on cases," she told the committee.

Earlier that day, Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., asked Jackson about her faith and she responded that she is "Protestant, nondenominational." When pressed further about how important her faith is to her, she said that it was very important but added: "There is no religious test in the Constitution under Article 6."

She also said it's very important to "set aside one's personal views about things" in the role of a judge.