

Comment Of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee,
On The Announced Retirement Plans
Of Associate Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens
April 9, 2010

When the Supreme Court recesses on Justice Stevens' final day on the bench, it will mark the end of an extraordinary judicial career spanning four decades, including 35 years on our highest court.

The last Justice from "the Greatest Generation," John Paul Stevens first answered the call to service when he joined the Navy during World War II. Our nation called on him again years later, and he returned to public service as an appellate judge before accepting President Ford's nomination to serve on the Supreme Court. He has since become one of the longest serving Justices on the Court. His confirmation was the first of a dozen Supreme Court nominations I have considered in my years in the Senate. As a young, freshman senator, it was a privilege to support his confirmation in 1975.

Justice Stevens' unique and enduring perspective is irreplaceable; his stalwart adherence to the rule of law is unparalleled. The federal judiciary, and indeed the entire nation, will miss his principled jurisprudence. While it is with a heavy heart, I wish him the best in his retirement.

As we move forward with preparations for the second Supreme Court nomination of this Congress, I am reminded of the Vermont marble inscribed above the entrance of the Supreme Court which pledges "Equal Justice Under Law." I hope that Senators on both sides of the aisle will make this process a thoughtful and civil discourse. I expect President Obama to continue his practice of consulting with members on both sides of the aisle as he considers this important nomination. The decisions of the Supreme Court are often made by only five individuals, but they impact the daily lives of each and every American. All Senators should strive to fulfill their constitutional duty of advise and consent, and give fair and thorough consideration to Justice Stevens' successor.

#####