

THE WHITE HOUSE

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REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
ANNOUNCING JUDGE BRETT M. KAVANAUGH
AS THE NOMINEE FOR ASSOCIATE JUSTICE
OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

East Room

9:03 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: My fellow Americans, tonight I speak to you from the East Room of the White House regarding one of the most profound responsibilities of the President of the United States, and that is the selection of a Supreme Court Justice.

I've often heard that, other than matters of war and peace, this is the most important decision a President will make. The Supreme Court is entrusted with the safeguarding of the crown jewel of our Republic, the Constitution of the United States.

Twelve days ago, Justice Anthony Kennedy informed me of his decision to take senior status on the Supreme Court, opening a new vacancy. For more than four decades, Justice Kennedy served our nation with incredible passion and devotion. I'd like to thank Justice Kennedy for a lifetime of distinguished service. (Applause.)

In a few moments, I will announce my selection for Justice Kennedy's replacement. This is the second time I have been faced with this task. Last year, I nominated Judge Neil Gorsuch to replace the late, great Justice Antonin Scalia. (Applause.) I chose Justice Gorsuch because I knew that he, just like Justice Scalia, would be a faithful servant of our Constitution.

We are honored to be joined tonight by Justice Scalia's beloved wife, Maureen. Maureen. (Applause.) Thank you, Maureen.

Both Justice Kennedy and Justice Scalia were appointed by a President who understood that the best defense of our liberty and a judicial branch immune from political prejudice where judges that apply the Constitution as written. That President happened to be Ronald Reagan.

For this evening's announcement, we are joined by Ronald Reagan's Attorney General, Edwin Meese. Ed. (Applause.) And, Ed, I speak for everyone: Thank you for everything you've done to protect our nation's great legal heritage.

In keeping with President Reagan's legacy, I do not ask about a nominee's personal opinions. What matters is not a judge's political views, but whether they can set aside those views to do what the law and the Constitution require. I am pleased to say that I have found, without doubt, such a person.

Tonight, it is my honor and privilege to announce that I will nominate Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the United States Supreme Court. (Applause.)

I know the people in this room very well. They do not stand and give applause like that very often, so they have some respect. (Laughter.)

And Brett's wife, Ashley, and their two daughters, Margaret and Liza, have joined us on the podium. And thank you and congratulations to you as a family. Thank you. (Applause.)

Judge Kavanaugh has impeccable credentials, unsurpassed qualifications, and a proven commitment to equal justice under the law.

A graduate of Yale College and Yale Law School, Judge Kavanaugh currently teaches at Harvard, Yale, and Georgetown. Throughout legal circles, he is considered a judge's judge -- a true thought leader among his peers.

He is a brilliant jurist, with a clear and effective writing style, universally regarded as one of the finest and sharpest legal minds of our time. And just like Justice Gorsuch, he excelled as a clerk for Justice Kennedy. That's great. Thank you. (Applause.)

Judge Kavanaugh has devoted his life to public service. For the last 12 years, he has served as a judge on the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals -- with great distinction --

authoring over 300 opinions, which have been widely admired for their skill, insight, and rigorous adherence to the law.

Among those opinions are more than a dozen that the Supreme Court has adopted as the law of the land.

Beyond his great renown as a judge, he is active in his community. He coaches CYO Basketball, serves meals to needy families, and -- having learned from his mom who was a schoolteacher in D.C. -- tutors children at local elementary schools.

There is no one in America more qualified for this position, and no one more deserving.

I want to thank the senators on both sides of the aisle, Republican and Democrat, for their consultation and advice during the selection process. This incredibly qualified nominee deserves a swift confirmation and robust bipartisan support.

The Rule of Law is our nation's proud heritage. It is the cornerstone of our freedom. It is what guarantees equal justice. And the Senate now has the chance to protect this glorious heritage by sending Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the United States Supreme Court.

And now, Judge, the podium is yours. (Applause.)

JUDGE KAVANAUGH: Mr. President, thank you. Throughout this process, I've witnessed firsthand your appreciation for the vital role of the American judiciary.

No President has ever consulted more widely, or talked with more people from more backgrounds, to seek input about a Supreme Court nomination.

Mr. President, I am grateful to you and I am humbled by your confidence in me. Thank you.

Thirty years ago, President Reagan nominated Anthony Kennedy to the Supreme Court. The framers established that the Constitution is designed to secure the blessings of liberty. Justice Kennedy devoted his career to securing liberty. I am deeply honored to be nominated to fill his seat on the Supreme Court. (Applause.)

My mom and dad are here. I am their only child. When people ask what it's like to be an only child, I say, "It depends on who your parents are." (Laughter.)

I was lucky. My mom was a teacher. In the 1960s and 70s she taught history at two largely African American public high schools in Washington, D.C. -- McKinley Tech and H.D. Woodson. Her example taught me the importance of equality for all Americans.

My mom was a trailblazer. When I was 10, she went to law school and became a prosecutor. My introduction to law came at our dinner table when she practiced her closing arguments. Her trademark line was: "Use you common sense. What rings true? What rings false?" That's good advice a juror, and for a son.

One of the few women prosecutors at that time, she overcame barriers and became a trial judge. The President introduced me tonight as Judge Kavanaugh. But to me that title will always belong to my mom.

My dad went to law school at night while working full time. He has an unparalleled work ethic and has passed down to me his passion for playing and watching sports. I love him dearly.

The motto of my Jesuit high school was "Men for others." I've tried to live that creed. I've spent my career in public service, from the executive branch and the White House to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. I've served with 17 other judges, each of them a colleague and a friend.

My judicial philosophy is straightforward. A judge must be independent and must interpret the law, not make the law. A judge must interpret statutes as written. And a judge must interpret the Constitution as written, informed by history and tradition and precedent.

For the past 11 years, I've taught hundreds of students, primarily at Harvard Law School. I teach that the Constitution's separation of powers protects individual liberty, and I remain grateful to the dean who hired me, Justice Elena Kagan.

As a judge, I hire four law clerks each year. I look for the best. My law clerks come from diverse backgrounds and

points of view. I am proud that a majority of my law clerks have been women.

I am part of the vibrant Catholic community in the D.C. area. The members of that community disagree about many things, but we are united by a commitment to serve. Father John Enzler is here. Forty years ago, I was an altar boy for Father John. These days, I help him serve meals to the homeless at Catholic Charities.

I have two spirited daughters -- (laughter) -- Margaret and Liza. Margaret loves sports, and she loves to read. Liza loves sports, and she loves to talk. (Laughter.) I have tried to create bonds with my daughters like my dad created with me. For the past seven years, I have coached my daughter's basketball teams. The girls on the team call me "Coach K." (Laughter.) I am proud of our Blessed Sacrament team that just won the city championship. (Applause.)

My daughters and I also go to lots of games. Our favorite memory was going to the historic Notre Dame-Yukon women's basketball game at this year's Final Four. Unforgettable.

My wife Ashley is a West Texan. A graduate of Abilene Cooper Public High School and the University of Texas. She is now the town manager of our community. We met in 2001 when we both worked in the White House. Our first date was on September 10, 2001. The next morning, I was a few steps behind her as the Secret Service shouted at all of us to sprint out the front gates of the White House because there was an inbound plane. In the difficult weeks that followed, Ashley was a source of strength for President Bush and for everyone in this building. Through bad days and so many better days since then, she's been a great wife and inspiring mom. I thank God every day for my family. (Applause.)

Tomorrow, I begin meeting with members of the Senate, which plays an essential role in this process. I will tell each senator that I revere the Constitution. I believe that an independent judiciary is the crown jewel of our constitutional republic. If confirmed by the Senate, I will keep an open mind in every case, and I will always strive to preserve the Constitution of the United States and the American Rule of Law.

Thank you, Mr. President. (Applause.)

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9:18 P.M.