

Trump announces Amy Coney Barrett as nominee for Supreme Court seat

The announcement sets up what is likely to be a fierce confirmation battle.

President Trump on Saturday announced he has chosen Amy Coney Barrett as his pick to fill the Supreme Court seat vacated by the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg — a move that could significantly shift the nation’s highest court to the right if she’s confirmed by the Senate.

“Today it is my honor to nominate one of our nation’s most brilliant and gifted legal minds to the Supreme Court,” Trump said in the Rose Garden alongside Barrett. “She is a woman of unparalleled achievement, towering intellect, sterling credentials and unyielding loyalty to the Constitution — Judge Amy Coney Barrett.”

REPUBLICANS EYE OCT. 12 FOR START OF SCOTUS CONFIRMATION HEARINGS: SOURCE



Judge Amy Coney Barrett applauds as President Donald Trump announces Barrett as his nominee to the Supreme Court, in the Rose Garden at the White House, Sept. 26, in Washington. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

Barrett, a judge on the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals, had been considered by Trump for the vacancy left by the retiring Justice Anthony Kennedy in 2018. Trump eventually chose now-Justice Brett Kavanaugh instead, but a source told Fox News that she had been at the front of his mind to fill a vacancy by Ginsburg.

Speaking at the White House, Barrett said she understood that “this is a momentous decision for a president and if the Senate does me the honor of confirming me, I pledge to discharge the responsibilities of this job to the very best of my ability.”

“I love the United States and I love the United States Constitution. I am truly humbled by the prospect of serving on the Supreme Court,” she said.

Both Trump and Barrett paid tribute to Ginsburg, with Trump describing her as a “legal giant and a pioneer for women.”

Ginsburg, a consistent vote on the court’s liberal wing, died last week at 87. The announcement sets up what is likely to be a fierce confirmation battle as Republicans attempt to confirm Barrett before the election on Nov. 3.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has promised to put a nominee up for a vote, despite the objections of Senate Democrats — who cite McConnell’s refusal to give Obama nominee Merrick Garland a hearing in 2016 as why a nominee should not be considered in an election year.

McConnell praised Barrett in a statement, saying Trump “could not have made a better decision.”

“Judge Amy Coney Barrett is an exceptionally impressive jurist and an exceedingly well-qualified nominee to the Supreme Court of the United States,” he said.

Senate Judiciary Chairman Lindsey Graham hailed Barrett as “highly qualified in all the areas that matter - character, integrity, intellect, and judicial disposition.”

“As the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I’m very committed to ensuring that the nominee gets a challenging, fair, and respectful hearing,” he said. “We move forward on this nomination knowing that the President has picked

a highly qualified individual who will serve our nation well on the highest court in the land.”

Democrats, meanwhile, continued to object to the timing of the nomination, and also sought to frame the battle as one over health care. They noted the looming COVID-19 pandemic and a legal battle over ObamaCare, as well as concerns that a conservative court could overturn *Roe v Wade* — the landmark 1973 ruling on abortion.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-NY, declared a vote for Barrett as “a vote to strike down the Affordable Care Act and eliminate protections for millions of Americans with pre-existing conditions.”

AMY CONEY BARRETT CONFIRMATION FIGHT: SENATE GOP HAS MATH ON THEIR SIDE

“By nominating Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court, President Trump has once again put Americans’ healthcare in the crosshairs,” he said, adding he would “strongly” oppose her nomination.

He also accused Trump and McConnell of “shamelessly rushing to fill Justice Ginsburg’s seat less than 40 days before a presidential election.”

“Justice Ginsburg’s dying wish was that she not be replaced until a new president is installed. Republicans are poised to not only ignore her wishes, but to replace her with someone who could tear down everything that she built,” he said. “This reprehensible power grab is a cynical attack on the legitimacy of the Court.”

Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden echoed those sentiments.

“The American people know the U.S. Supreme Court decisions affect their everyday lives. The United States Constitution was designed to give the voters one chance to have their voice heard on who serves on the Court,” he said in a statement. “That moment is now and their voice should be heard. The Senate should not act on this vacancy until after the American people select their next president and the next Congress.”

His running mate, Sen. Kamala Harris, said that conservatives “intend to destroy the Affordable Care Act & overturn *Roe*.”

Kamala Harris@KamalaHarris

Trump's hand-picked successor to Justice Ginsburg's seat makes it clear: they intend to destroy the Affordable Care Act & overturn Roe. This selection would move the court further right for a generation & harm millions of Americans. I strongly oppose Judge Barrett's nomination.

"This selection would move the court further right for a generation & harm millions of Americans," she said. "I strongly oppose Judge Barrett's nomination."

Liberal groups, meanwhile, promised to fight the nomination. Planned Parenthood Action Fund President Alexis McGill Johnson said that "we can't afford to see this nomination succeed."

"Nominating Amy Coney Barrett is a particular insult to the legacy of Justice Ginsburg. Barrett's history of hostility toward reproductive health and rights, expanded health care access, and more demonstrate that she will put Justice Ginsburg's long record of ensuring that everyone receives equal justice under the law at risk," she said.

A source familiar with the process told Fox News that Oct. 12 is the target date for the beginning of confirmation hearings. This means that Barrett, 48, could potentially be confirmed by the end of the month and just days before the election.

Barrett, a former Notre Dame professor and a mother of seven, is a devout Catholic and anti-abortion — beliefs that were flagged by Democrats during her 2017 confirmation hearing to the 7th Circuit.

"The dogma lives loudly within you, and that's of concern," Senate Judiciary Committee Ranking Member Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., told Barrett. She was eventually confirmed 55-43.

Trump also was believed to have been considering candidates including 11th Circuit Judge Barbara Lagoa. Trump said publicly that he had five potential picks.

A source told Fox News that Trump had taken note of how "tough" Barrett was when she faced a confirmation fight in 2017 and had kept her very much at the front of his mind since then.

WHERE HAS AMY CONEY BARRETT STOOD ON IMPORTANT CASES?

The source said Trump met her during the considerations on who to replace Kennedy in 2018, talked to a lot of people about her and wanted to keep her in place through the Kavanaugh vetting process in case there was an issue. Kavanaugh did face hurdles in his confirmation battle, but that came after his nomination was announced.

The source said that after Ginsburg died, Barrett was the only candidate he met and spoke with at length, although he made a few calls to Lagoa because some people were pushing him very hard to do so. But ultimately Barrett was always at the front of Trump's mind to fill a Ginsburg vacancy.

Should she be confirmed, Barrett would be Trump's third Supreme Court confirmation. That's more than two-term Presidents Barack Obama, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush — who each put two justices on the court.

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While Democrats have vowed to oppose the pick, the Senate math does not appear to be in their favor. Republicans have 53 Senate seats and Barrett only needs 50 to be confirmed — with Vice President Mike Pence acting as a tie breaker in such a case.

So far, only sens. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, and Susan Collins, R-Maine, have indicated they oppose moving forward with a confirmation before the election. Murkowski has since suggested she still may vote for the nominee.

Fox News' John Roberts, Mike Emanuel and Tyler Olson contributed to this report.

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