

April 25, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-1702

The Honorable Harry Reid  
United States Senate  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-2803

Dear Senators McConnell and Reid:

As history, civics, and social studies educators, we urge the United States Senate to do its job and hold a hearing and an up-or-down vote on the President's nominee for the United States Supreme Court: Merrick Garland, chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit.

As we teach our students, Article 2, Section 2 of the Constitution stipulates that it is the President's duty to nominate Supreme Court justices and the Senate's duty to provide "advice and consent"—take action on such nominations. Moreover, as Alexander Hamilton wrote in the Federalist Papers, the Senate should not reject a nominee unless there are "special and strong reasons for the refusal." Judge Garland is clearly qualified and holds the high ethical standards expected of a Supreme Court justice.

If a student answered on an exam that our Presidents lose the power to appoint Supreme Court justices in the fourth year of their term, that answer would be marked "incorrect"—neither the text of the Constitution nor tradition justify it. In fact, since 1875, every Supreme Court nominee has received either a hearing or a vote. Those nominated or confirmed in the final year of a President's term include John Marshall, one of the earliest chief justices, and Anthony Kennedy, who was nominated by President Ronald Reagan and still serves.

As educators in the classroom, we believe it is our responsibility to help students learn about—and appreciate—the role citizens play in our democracy. We teach that being a good citizen requires cooperation, mutual respect, and the ability to compromise. When our students work in groups, they work together and do their jobs, even when they are not friends or have disagreements.

Please help us teach our students the true meaning of democracy. Demonstrate that America's leaders can put aside their differences to do their jobs. For the sake of the students who are the future of America, we urge you to hold a hearing and up-or-down vote on Judge Garland, the President's nominee for the Supreme Court.

Sincerely,

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