NATIONAL: SENATE SHOULD CONSIDER SCOTUS PICK

Public says GOP playing politics with nomination

West Long Branch, NJ – The American public feels that a president’s Supreme Court nominations should be taken up by the U.S. Senate no matter when they occur, according to the latest Monmouth University Poll. Specifically, two-thirds say that Pres. Obama’s recent nomination deserves a hearing and 3-in-4 Americans think Senate Republicans are playing politics by refusing to consider it.

In general, a majority (53%) of Americans say that the Senate should consider Supreme Court nominations even if they occur at the very end of a president’s term. Another 43% say that these late vacancies should be put on hold so that voters can consider the potential nomination when deciding who to elect as the next president.

Now that Obama has named Merrick Garland to fill the seat left vacant by Antonin Scalia’s death, though, a full 69% of the public feel the Senate should hold hearings on the nomination. Just 25% say that the Senate should not consider the nomination. Majorities of Democrats (85%), independents (66%), and Republicans (56%) alike say that Garland should get a hearing.

“The GOP leadership say they won’t hold hearings on Obama’s nomination in order to give the American people a voice in the process in November. The American people don’t buy that argument,” said Patrick Murray, director of the independent Monmouth University Polling Institute.

Just 16% of the public agrees that the Senate Republicans are refusing to consider Garland primarily to give the public a say in the nomination. Fully 77% think the GOP leadership is just playing politics. Those who see this stance as mainly a political ploy include large majorities of Democrats (86%), independents (80%), and Republicans (62%).

Many Americans have not heard enough about Garland yet to offer an opinion on his fitness for the Court. Overall, 28% say his judicial experience makes him very qualified for the position, 18% say
he is somewhat qualified, and just 5% say he is not qualified. Another 49% have not heard enough to offer an opinion. When those without an initial opinion are asked to take a guess about his qualifications, those saying he is likely to be very qualified increases 12 percentage points to 40% and those saying he is likely to be somewhat qualified goes up 19 points to 37%. Those who say he is probably not qualified goes up only 4 points to 9%.

When asked about the nominee’s political views, 22% see Garland as a moderate, 11% say he is a liberal, and 3% say he is a conservative. However, 65% say they don’t know enough about his views at the moment. When this latter group is asked to take a guess, the number who say Garland is likely to be a moderate increases 20 percentage points to 42%, the number who says he is likely to be a liberal goes up 21 points to 32%, and the number who say he is probably a conservative goes up 5 points to 8%.

“While the American public has just been introduced to him, the general presumption is that Garland is probably a qualified, moderate candidate for the Supreme Court,” said Murray.

The Monmouth University Poll also found an uptick in Barack Obama’s job performance rating. Currently, 49% of the public approve and 43% disapprove. The public was evenly divided in January at 46% approve and 46% disapprove. Congress has also seen a slight improvement in its job performance rating, although it is still abysmally low. Currently, 22% of the public approves of the job Congress is doing while the vast majority (68%) disapprove.

“This is the first time Congress’s approval rating has crossed the 20 percent threshold in nearly a year, so I guess that’s something,” said Murray. “The wide gap in opinions on Obama and Congress suggests that the president may have an easier time getting the public on his side regarding Garland.”

The poll also found that 49% of the public approves of the job the U.S. Supreme Court is doing, compared to 33% who disapprove. Democrats (65%) are the most likely to approve of the Court while Republicans (36%) are the least likely.

The Monmouth University Poll was conducted by telephone from March 17 to 20, 2016 with 1,008 adults in the United States. This sample has a margin of error of ± 3.1 percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, NJ.
### DATA TABLES

*The questions referred to in this release are as follows:*

("Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

**[Q1-15 held for future release]**

16. Do you approve or disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as president?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>POLITICAL IDEOLOGY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VOTER</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approve</td>
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<tr>
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<td>45%</td>
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<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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**TREND:**

- **March 2016:** 49%
- **January 2016:** 46%
- **December 2015:** 40%
- **October 2015:** 47%
- **September 2015:** 45%
- **August 2015:** 47%
- **July 2015:** 44%
- **June 2015:** 42%
- **April 2015:** 43%
- **January 2015:** 41%
- **December 2014:** 42%
- **July 2013:** 41%

**Unwtd N:** 1,008

17. Do you approve or disapprove of the job the U.S. Congress is doing?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VOTER</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<td>72%</td>
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<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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**TREND:**

- **March 2016:** 22%
- **January 2016:** 17%
- **December 2015:** 16%
- **October 2015:** 17%
- **September 2015:** 17%
- **August 2015:** 18%
- **July 2015:** 19%
- **June 2015:** 21%
- **April 2015:** 18%
- **January 2015:** 14%
- **December 2014:** 17%
- **July 2013:** 14%

**Unwtd N:** 1,008

18. Do you approve or disapprove of the job the U.S. Supreme Court is doing?

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VOTER</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>49%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disapprove</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(VOL) No opinion</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
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19. Which of the following statements comes closer to your view: The sitting president has the power to nominate Supreme Court justices and the Senate should consider those nominations even if they occur at the very end of a president’s term - or - Supreme Court vacancies that occur at the end of a president’s term should be put on hold so that voters can consider the potential nomination when deciding who to elect as the next president?

**[CHOICES WERE ROTATED]**
20. As you may have heard, President Obama recently nominated Merrick Garland to fill the current vacancy on the Supreme Court. Now that the nomination has been made, do you think the U.S. Senate should or should not hold hearings to consider Obama’s nominee?

<table>
<thead>
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<td>69%</td>
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<td>57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Should not</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(VOL) Don't know</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
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21. Do you think the Senate Republicans who say they will refuse to hold hearings on the nomination are doing this more to give the American people a voice in the process or more because they are playing politics?

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Conservative.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Rep</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give American people a voice</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing politics</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(VOL) Both</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(VOL) Don't know</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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22. From what you have heard about him, do you think Merrick Garland is more of a liberal, a conservative, or a moderate, or haven’t you heard enough about him?

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<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>Rep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haven't heard enough</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(VOL) Refused</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. [If “HAVEN'T HEARD ENOUGH” IN Q22:] If you had to take a guess, do you think he is probably more of a liberal, a conservative, or a moderate? [RESULTS IN TABLE BELOW ALSO INCLUDE THOSE WHO GAVE AN ANSWER IN Q22.]

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>Rep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

24. And from what you have heard of his judicial experience, do you think Merrick Garland is very qualified, somewhat qualified, or not qualified to serve on the Supreme Court, or haven’t you heard enough about his judicial experience?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGISTERED VOTER</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Rep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very qualified</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat qualified</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not qualified</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haven't heard enough</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(VOL) Refused</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
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</table>
25. [If “HAVEN’T HEARD ENOUGH” IN Q24:] If you had to take a guess, do you think he is probably very qualified, somewhat qualified, or not qualified? [RESULTS IN TABLE BELOW ALSO INCLUDE THOSE WHO GAVE AN ANSWER IN Q24.]

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very qualified</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat qualified</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not qualified</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Monmouth University Poll was sponsored and conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from March 17 to 20, 2016 with a national random sample of 1,008 adults age 18 and older. This includes 656 contacted by a live interviewer on a landline telephone and 352 contacted by a live interviewer on a cell phone, in English. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey design, data weighting and analysis. Final sample is weighted for region, age, education, gender and race based on US Census information. Data collection support provided by Braun Research (field) and SSI (RDR sample). For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points (unadjusted for sample design). Sampling error can be larger for sub-groups (see table below). In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.