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Excerpt from Press Conference (11/7/02)

Jackson, from Texas. You got anything -- a Texas question?

Q As a matter of fact, I do. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

Q Do you intend to resuscitate the nomination of Priscilla Owen and Charles Pickering? And, also, how bloody do you think the next Supreme Court nomination will be?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first, I want the new chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee to understand that I am very serious about the reforms that I suggested in the East Room, about how to get this process of nominating judges and approving judges on the right course, not only for this administration, but future administrations; not only for this Senate, but future Senates. And so step one on the judiciary process, I believe there needs to be reform. I would be glad to reprise the reforms if you can't remember them.

Q Owen and Pickering, are they going to --

THE PRESIDENT: I'll be there in a minute. (Laughter.) I'm using this as an opportunity to make a point on judicial reform. And that is that if a judge thinks he's going to retire, give us a year's notice, if possible. And then we will act -- "we," the administrative branch, will nominate somebody and clear them within 180 days. And then the Senate judiciary has got 90 days to go through the process and then get the person's name to the floor, and 180 days for an up or down vote. To me that would be a needed and necessary reform.

So step one on the nomination process is to work with Senator Hatch -- and Senator Leahy -- to put these reforms in place; is to convince members of the Senate we're serious about a process that will get rid of the old bitterness of the judicial process.

This is probably not to your liking, by the way. You love those court fights. I'm confident it makes great covering and great stories.

I also said at the time of Priscilla Owen's being -- not being put to the floor of the Senate that I would hope that the judiciary

committee would let her name out to the Senate floor at some point in time. We don't have to recommit them, they never -- they're there. Pickering and Owen are still there at the committee level. They just weren't ever -- their names were never let to the floor for a vote.

By the way, if they had been let to the floor for a vote, we believe they would have won the vote -- perhaps the reason why they were never let to the floor for a vote. But -- so, I hope that judiciary committee will let their names out and they get a fair hearing.

I thought you were going to talk about the Texas elections. But that's okay. (Laughter.)