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Editorial | Island Voices

# All we are asking of GOP senators is that they do their job

By U.S. Sen. Mazie Hirono

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Senate Republicans have publicly vowed to block any nominee from President Barack Obama to fill the current vacancy on the U.S. Supreme Court.

They won't hold a hearing. They won't hold a vote. They won't even meet with the president's nominee.

In defending their decision, Republicans claim they are waiting until after the November election in order to give the American people a voice in the nomination.

Presumably all they really mean is that they would like a Republican president to nominate someone.

Seriously, it's time for Republicans to do their job instead of recklessly playing partisan games.

For nearly 150 years, Congress has kept the total number of justices at nine.

The Senate began holding public confirmation hearings in 1916. Since that time, the Senate majority has never denied a hearing or a vote on a nominee.

Since 1900 the median time it has taken to fill a Supreme Court vacancy has been 79 days, regardless of whether it's an election year or not. In fact, during President Ronald Reagan's final term, a Democratic Senate confirmed current Justice Anthony Kennedy.

In the last 100 years, the Senate majority has never outright refused consideration of any nominee from a sitting President.

It is astounding how far Republicans have gone in following the call of their presidential contenders, Donald Trump and Ted Cruz, to delay any nominee.

Last Congress I served on the Senate Judiciary Committee. Part of the purposeful work we did in that committee was to fill federal court vacancies by holding hearings and performing our Constitutional role to provide advice and consent, ensuring that our courts would have highly qualified, fair-minded judges who would apply the rule of law in their deliberations.

No judicial appointment is as consequential as a lifetime appointment to the highest court in the land. The Supreme Court should not be left to do its job with only eight members as opposed to the nine set by law.

The American people understand that we all should do our jobs: the president to fulfill his Constitutional responsibility to nominate a person to fill the Supreme Court vacancy, the Senate to undertake advice and consent on the nominee, and the Supreme Court to decide cases with a full and complete number of judges.

Pretty simple. Republicans, do your job.