

Here's Who the Legal Experts Say Will Replace Antonin Scalia

During the 2016 presidential race, one of the ways President-elect Donald Trump reached out to evangelical and conservative voters was by releasing a list of highly qualified conservative judges from which he would select his Supreme Court nominees.

With U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) suddenly appearing Tuesday at Trump Tower in Manhattan, there is growing speculation that the "short list" has grown to 21 prospective jurists. But already, legal experts are weighing in on who they think will be picked to replace Associate Justice Antonin Scalia.

Using the "Supreme Court fantasy league" FantasySCOTUS, a group of legal experts have been picking who they think is most likely to be selected from the "20-plus-1" list of candidates. Josh Blackman, a law professor at South Texas College of Law in Houston, runs the website that is popular with lawyers, judges and journalists who cover the federal courts.

As of this writing, the current "Top 5" are:

- 1-t. Judge Raymond Kethledge—U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit; appointed by President George W. Bush; native of New Jersey, graduate of the University of Michigan Law School; clerked for Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy.
- 1-t. Judge William H. Pryor Jr.—U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit and Commissioner on the U.S. Sentencing Commission; appointed by President George W. Bush; native of Alabama, graduate of the Tulane University Law School; served as Alabama Attorney

General.

- 3. U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas)–Senate Judiciary Committee; native of Calgary, Canada, graduate of Harvard Law School; clerked for Chief Justice William Rehnquist; served as Texas Solicitor General.
- 4. Judge Diane Sykes–U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit; appointed by President George W. Bush; formerly a Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court; appointed by Gov. Tommy Thompson; native of Wisconsin, graduate of Marquette University Law School; was a Supreme Court candidate for President George W. Bush.
- 5. Judge Neil Gorsuch–U.S. Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit; appointed by President George W. Bush; native of Colorado, graduate of Harvard Law School; clerked for Justices Byron White and Anthony Kennedy.

The website is also predicting the date on which Trump's first Supreme Court nominee will be confirmed. So far, the leading date is Feb. 28, 2017. March 31, 2017, is coming in a distant second.