

Still No Word on Why President Obama Is Skipping Antonin Scalia's Funeral

When the funeral Mass for Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonin Scalia is held Saturday at Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, President and First Lady Obama will not be in attendance.

During Wednesday afternoon's White House press briefing, spokesman Josh Earnest offered only these scant details:

"The president and the first lady, on Friday, will travel to the Supreme Court to pay their respects to Justice Scalia as he lies in repose there at the Supreme Court. I can tell you that Vice President Biden and Dr. Jill Biden will attend Justice Scalia's funeral at the Basilica on Saturday."

Pressed to further explain why the president wasn't attending, the funeral, Earnest declined to comment. The announcement triggered critical responses from Obama allies and foes alike.

Former Obama administration official Stephen Rattner sent out the following on Twitter after the news broke: "If we want to reduce partisanship, we can start by honoring great public servants who we disagree with."

MSNBC host Chris Hayes said, "Some amazing advice my mom gave me once: 'If you're wondering whether you should go to the funeral, you should go to the funeral.'"

FOX News Channel host Sean Hannity took the opportunity to point out "other funerals Obama has been too busy to attend."

Despite the outcry, the White House has steadfastly refused to comment on the president's plans for Saturday in lieu of attending the funeral.

Only eight Supreme Court justices have died in office over the past century: Chief Justices William Rehnquist (2005), Fred Vinson (1953), Harlan Stone (1946), and Edward Douglass White (1921); and Associate Justices Robert Jackson (1954), Wiley Rutledge (1949), Frank Murphy (1949), and Pierce Butler (1939).