

Vice President Biden: Supreme Court Nominee Won't be 'Most Liberal'

President Barack Obama cannot select the most liberal possible candidate for the Supreme Court and instead was seeking a "consensus" pick who could attract Republican support, Vice President Joe Biden said in a radio interview on Thursday.

The Democratic president is preparing to name a replacement for conservative Justice Antonin Scalia, who died on Saturday.

Many Republicans, led by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, have said the seat should remain vacant until Obama's successor takes office next January so voters can have a say in the selection when they choose a new president in the Nov. 8 election.

"The Senate gets to have a say," Biden, a former senator, told Minnesota Public Radio. "In order to get this done, the president is not going to be able to go out, nor would it be his instinct anyway, to pick the most liberal jurist in the nation and put them on the court."

The Senate must confirm any nominee picked for a lifetime appointment to the nation's highest court. Obama's nominee could change the court's balance of power. Scalia's death left it with four conservative and four liberal justices.

"There are plenty of judges who are on high courts already who have had unanimous support of the Republicans. This should be someone who, in fact, is a consensus and whereby we can generate enough support to get a person passed."

Separately, retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman to serve on the court and a nominee of

Republican President Ronald Reagan, took issue with Republicans who are demanding that Obama's successor get to fill Scalia's vacancy.

"I don't agree," O'Connor, 85, told an Arizona television station. "We need somebody in there to do the job—and just get on with it."

She called it "an important position, and one we care about as a nation, as a people."

Some Republican senators were urging their leaders to at least allow the customary Judiciary Committee confirmation hearings to proceed on any Obama nominee.

"I do believe that the nominee should get a hearing," Senator Lisa Murkowski told reporters in her home state of Alaska on Wednesday.

She added, "That doesn't necessarily mean that ends up in a vote" by the Senate to confirm the nominee.

Senators Dean Heller of Nevada and Thom Tillis of North Carolina this week also indicated support for allowing the Senate to consider Obama's nominee.

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