

When the Senate Majority Leader Is Asked About Confirming Judge Garland During a Lame Duck Session

Republican U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell on Sunday ruled out Senate confirmation of Democratic President Barack Obama's Supreme Court nominee this year, even if after the November election it appears the next president may pick a liberal who Republicans would like even less.

In television interviews, McConnell said Republican senators had no intention of confirming Democrat Obama's nominee, Merrick Garland, even if Democrats win the White House in November, putting them in the position to nominate someone more liberal than Garland when the new president takes office in January.

"I can't imagine that a Republican-majority Congress, in a lame-duck session, after the American people have spoken (in the election), would want to confirm (Garland)," McConnell told CNN.

"That's not going to happen," McConnell told Fox News on Sunday. "The principle is the same, whether it's before the election or after the election. The principle is the American people are choosing their next president and their next president should pick this Supreme Court nominee."

Nominees to the lifetime Supreme Court post require Senate confirmation. But McConnell says the Republican-run Senate will not hold a hearing or a vote on Garland.

Republicans have said they want the next president to make the selection, hoping their party wins November's election.

Billionaire businessman Donald Trump is the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination.

Garland, 63, is widely viewed as a moderate, admired by both Democrats and Republicans. Republican Senators Orrin Hatch and Jeff Flake last week raised the possibility of Senate action on Garland late this year if Democrats keep the White House in the Nov. 8 election.

McConnell seemed keen to shut down that idea on Sunday, saying the Republican majority would not want to confirm Garland “even if it were soon to be in the minority.”

Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid told “Meet the Press” that he thought the Republican facade against Garland would break, because some Republican senators already have said they would be willing to meet Garland, and one Republican – Senator Mark Kirk of Illinois – has said there should be a vote.

“McConnell is leading his Senate over the cliff. And I am telling everybody that’s watching this, the senators aren’t going to allow that,” Reid said.

The White House said it would stand by Obama’s nominee.

“We will stand by him from now until he is confirmed and he’s sitting on the Supreme Court,” White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough said on Fox News on Sunday.

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