

**Statement of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
Executive Business Meeting
November 20, 2014**

We have a full agenda today and I hope we can make progress on several issues, including one that is of particular importance to me. For years, I have worked to improve government transparency and openness. Over the last decade Senator Cornyn has joined me in this fight by partnering on legislation to improve the Freedom of Information Act. Today the Committee will consider the FOIA Improvement Act of 2014 which Senator Cornyn and I introduced in June of this year. We have worked with Democrats and Republicans to address some concerns with the legislation, and the managers' amendment we will offer today is a reflection of those conversations. The bill has strong support on both sides of the aisle, and I expect it will be reported out favorably. I also hope we can report out H.R. 1447, The Death in Custody Reporting Act of 2013.

Today, we also have nine judicial nominations and one executive nomination on the agenda. All of the judicial nominations were held over last week and are ready to be reported to the Senate floor. At last week's mark up, I had hoped to report at least the three nominations to fill judicial emergency vacancies in Texas. Unfortunately neither Texas Senator showed up to make the case to other Republican members to report out the Texas nominees and the Ranking Member asked that they be held over. One of these Texas vacancies has been left empty for six years. With nine current, and four known future, Texas district court vacancies, I hope the Texas Senators will secure cooperation on their side of the aisle so that rather than adding them to the list of routine filibusters they can be confirmed by consent before we adjourn.

Listed for the first time on today's agenda is the nomination of Sarah Saldaña to be Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security, where she will lead the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office. Ms. Saldaña's nomination was unanimously reported out of the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee and she is no stranger to this Committee since she currently serves as the U.S. Attorney in Dallas, Texas. In order to earn that position, she had the support of the Texas senators. I have heard of no opposition to Ms. Saldaña from any member of this Committee, so if we can get cooperation to report her nomination out today, we might not need to hold any mark ups in December.

#####