

Statement of
The Honorable Patrick Leahy

United States Senator
Vermont
May 6, 2010

Statement Of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee,
Executive Business Meeting
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Last week we were able to make significant progress. I thank the Democratic Senators and Senator Grassley for making that possible.

It was perhaps coincidental that within days of our approving bipartisan legislation to provide greater public access to proceedings in our Federal courts, the Supreme Court announced that it was closing its front doors and traditional front entrance to visitors. Justice Breyer noted his "regret" and called the change "unfortunate" and "dispiriting" and wrote of his "hope that the public will one day in the future be able to enter the Court's Great Hall after passing under the famous words 'Equal Justice Under Law.'" I share that hope and his appreciation for the meaning of those words carved in the Vermont marble over the main entrance to our Nation's highest court.

Justice Breyer closed his statement with the observation that "a Congressional appropriation" might "enable the restoration of the Supreme Court's main entrance as a symbol of dignified openness and meaningful access to equal justice under law." I will work with others on this Committee and the Appropriations Committee to try to provide such an appropriation, just as we worked together to enact and fund the Court Security Improvement Act of 2007.

On today's agenda we have our bipartisan resolution to acknowledge the dedication and sacrifices made by our law enforcement officers killed or injured in the line of duty. I hope that we can report that measure today so that it can be enacted next week as part of "Police Week," which will culminate next Saturday with the National Police Officers Memorial Day ceremony on the Capitol grounds. One hundred and sixteen state, local and Federal police officers across the country were killed in the line of duty last year. We are all in their debt.

We can also report the bill to codify as title 51 of our United States Code laws relating to national and commercial space programs.

We have carried over onto today's agenda the Crimes Against Humanity bill.

We have 11 of President Obama's nominees on the agenda ready for final action by the Committee. I want to thank Senator Sessions for helping recently to get the U.S. Attorney and U.S. Marshal nominees we have reported considered by the Senate more quickly.

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