

Ron Johnson Ditches His Own Judicial Nominee After 2,323 Days

Written by Democratic Party of Wisconsin, Brandon Weathersby
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MADISON - *"What did Johnson have to say? Who knows. He didn't even show up."*

[Ron Johnson Ditches His Own Judicial Nominee After Ignoring Court Vacancy For 2,323 Days](#) By Jennifer Bendery
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Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) just can't bring himself to play well with others.

He's spent more than six years — 2,323 days, to be precise — singlehandedly [preventing a vacancy on a court that covers his state from being filled](#). It's the longest circuit court vacancy in the country.

That's why it was a big deal Wednesday when the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing for Wisconsin lawyer Donald Schott, who would fill that seat on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit. Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), Schott's other home-state senator, introduced him with rave reviews. A few committee members peppered him with questions, but signaled no problems with his qualifications.

What did Johnson have to say? Who knows. He didn't even show up.

Typically, both of a nominee's senators come to these hearings to make the best case possible for confirming the nominee. Schott was one of eight finalists for the seat suggested by the Wisconsin senators' own commission. And Johnson previously joined Baldwin in turning in their "blue slips" for Schott — a procedural step that signals a senator is ready to advance a nominee in the committee.

A Johnson spokeswoman didn't respond to a request for comment on why he skipped the hearing or whether he actually plans to push to confirm Schott, versus just turning in his blue slip for appearance's sake.

At least one Wisconsin senator was eager to introduce a home-state nominee to the Judiciary Committee.

Johnson's efforts to stall on filling the 7th Circuit seat fit into a broader GOP strategy of blocking nearly all of President Barack Obama's judicial picks this year. That's because Republican leaders would prefer to hold out until 2017, when Donald Trump might be in the White House (is this really happening?) and put forward lifetime judicial nominees more to their liking.

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The problem is that courts with vacancies can get so swamped that people's cases are delayed for years even as [judges grapple with burnout](#) . There are currently 87 federal court vacancies. Twenty-eight are considered emergencies.

Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), who chairs the Judiciary Committee, said last week that he expects the Senate to stop any confirmation of judges by the time August hits. That doesn't bode well for the 7th Circuit, which is positioned to roll into year seven with this vacant seat.