

Democrats grow frustrated as Gorsuch continues to avoid taking stances on judicial issues

Key takeaways from SCOTUS confirmation hearings

Nominee: Neil Gorsuch

Date	What happened
Monday, March 20: <i>Gorsuch’s opening remarks to the Senate Judiciary Committee</i>	On the opening day, before Gorsuch had a chance to speak, Democrats made use of their speaking time to remind the public that Republicans refused to consider a hearing for Merrick Garland, President Obama’s nominee last year. Gorsuch gave a rehearsed 16-minute speech during which he portrayed himself as a nonpartisan judge. He also appeared to brace for critics who claim that his rulings favor corporate interests, and presented himself as a modest westerner who enjoys fly-fishing.
Tuesday, March 21: <i>Gorsuch declines to offer many opinions</i>	On day two, Democrats were unable to get Gorsuch to reveal his views on issues that could be heard by the Supreme Court. Gorsuch called <i>Roe v. Wade</i> precedent of the Supreme Court without offering any interpretation, and called the <i>Obergefell v. Hodges</i> case (which upheld the right to same-sex marriage nationwide) “absolutely settled law,” without indicating whether he agreed with the decision. When asked about torture, Gorsuch listed precedent of cases that banned torture. He also denied claims by a former student that he made sexist remarks as a law professor.
Wednesday, March 22 <i>Gorsuch continues to avoid taking stances</i>	Democrats appeared frustrated on the third day as Gorsuch continued to avoid taking stances on most issues. Senator Grassley asked Gorsuch about the idea of allowing cameras into Supreme Court hearings, but Gorsuch made no comment. When Senator Feinstein criticized Gorsuch’s originalist interpretation of the Constitution, he countered that it “matters not a whit” whether those who wrote the Constitution were racist and sexist, all that matters is “what the words on the page mean.” Referencing a book Gorsuch wrote in opposition to assisted suicide, Senator Feinstein gave personal anecdotes about times when it was the only humane option.
Thursday, March 23 <i>Testimonies on behalf of and in opposition to Gorsuch</i>	Former clerks and colleagues testified to praise Gorsuch as fair, kind and empathetic while representatives from progressive groups cast him as a judge who rules against workers and the little guy. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) declared that he will attempt to filibuster the nomination, citing Gorsuch’s “deep-seated conservative ideology.”

Sources: Matt Ford, “What does Judge Gorsuch believe?” *The Atlantic*, March 21, 2017; Ashley Killough and Ariane de Vogue, “Gorsuch grilled on Trump: ‘No man is above the law,’” *CNN*, March 21, 2017; Matt Flegenheimer, “Gorsuch tries to put himself above politics in confirmation hearing,” *The New York Times*, March 20, 2017; Mariam Khan, “Neil Gorsuch emotional about right-to-die questions in Supreme Court confirmation hearings,” *ABC News*, March 22, 2017; Ariane de Vogue, “Gorsuch steers around Democrats’ sharp questions at hearing day 3,” *CNN*, March 22, 2017; “Neil Gorsuch confirmation hearing for Supreme Court, day 3,” *CBS News*, March 22, 2017.