

GOP LEADERS ADDRESS ANTI-CATHOLICISM

Senate Republicans, joined by three Democrats, stopped a filibuster of the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals; the vote was 54-42.

It was two Mormon Republicans, Senator Orrin Hatch and Senator Mike Lee, who made the most impassioned defense of Barrett's nomination.

The Notre Dame law professor's religious convictions were attacked recently by Senators Dianne Feinstein and Dick Durbin, teeing up a response from those supporting her. Both Democrats questioned her suitability to be seated on the federal bench given her strong Catholic beliefs. Neither has apologized for their bigoted remarks.

Senator Hatch did not hold back in his statement. "I have to say that we stoop pretty low if we start to raise questions of religious beliefs before somebody can serve on the federal judiciary. Now I hope that that type of questioning will hit the dustbin of history, where it belongs."

Senator Lee said "the fact of her religious beliefs or religious affiliation have nothing to do with her qualifications to serve as a federal appellate court judge."

Lee said of those Democrats who made snide remarks about her Catholicism: "They were asking, 'Do you actually believe that stuff? Do you actually believe the doctrine of your church? Do you believe it deeply, sincerely?' Suggesting that if so, that is somehow a problem."

Feinstein, who is Jewish, tried to deflect charges of anti-Catholicism by referencing her attendance at a Catholic school. Durbin, who is Catholic, referenced his Catholic

status. But credentials do not matter: What matters are words. On this count, both of them came very close to invoking a religious test against Professor Barrett, something which is barred by the Constitution.