

Will the Dogma Prevail in the Supreme Court? Three Minnesota Women on Amy Coney Barrett Nomination

BY MARYKATE FENSTERMAKER

JUST EIGHT DAYS AFTER the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, in a triumph for conservatives, President Trump announced his Supreme Court nominee: Judge Amy Coney Barrett, “a woman of unparalleled achievement, towering intellect, sterling credentials, [and] unyielding loyalty to the Constitution.”

Reaction is varied. Trish Pearson, a mother of two boys in Woodbury, believes that Ginsburg “paved the way for hard working women.” Additionally, she points out that, after extensive evaluation, Judge Barrett was deemed “well qualified” by the American Bar Association. Pointing out the “checks and balances” within the judicial system, she trusts Barrett to “uphold the constitution.” Kayla Brinkman, 18, a senior at Concordia University studying history, doesn’t agree. She pointed out that Judge Barrett’s nomination is a “setback for many, especially minorities.” Further, Brinkman fears that Judge Barrett may roll back many rulings the late “Justice Ginsburg fought hard for.”

Judge Barrett is inspired by late Justice Scalia for whom she clerked over 20 years ago: these “lessons still resonate”; “his judicial philosophy is mine too.” Appointed in 1986, Scalia led

the high court conservatives for 30 years, particularly regarding gay rights, racial discrimination, and abortion. Minnesota U.S. district court judge Patrick J. Schiltz, Barrett’s long-time mentor, says that “her religious convictions are pro-life, and she lives those convictions.” Barrett declares that her Catholicism does not influence her court decisions, but Brinkman remains unconvinced: “No one can be fully impartial; it is human nature, no matter your political party or where you stand on the political spectrum.” On the other hand, after reading Barrett’s letter of recommendation written by Notre Dame faculty, Pearson believes that Barrett “will not allow her own viewpoint to enter into her decision-making process.” Barrett, a 7th U.S. Circuit Court Judge, made a substantial impact on the three states under jurisdiction— Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin, especially in cases regarding reproductive rights, gun laws, women’s equality, and immigration rights.

Although Minnesota is not under the 7th U.S.

Circuit court, rather the 8th, Barrett could change previous rulings. Women and LGBTQ+ voters are critical in this year’s election, especially with Minnesota’s swing-state status. Recent polls find Trump losing support among women, especially in the Minnesota suburbs. Regardless, the nomination of Barrett pleases many conservative women as she has “strong dedication to family.” Judy Kaiser, a grandmother in Woodbury and longstanding anti-abortion advocate, says “Barrett will be an asset for women, including unborn women.” Kaiser believes that Barrett’s strongest qualification is “being a mother to seven children.” Despite Judge Barrett stating publicly that she “has no interest in challenging [Roe v Wade],” past rulings suggest that she could be key regarding Roe v. Wade, same-sex marriage, the Affordable Care Act, and the Victims’ Rights Act. If Roe v. Wade were overturned at the federal level, Minnesota’s Doe v Gomez would still protect abortion rights at the state level; however, the

overturn could encourage more restrictive abortion and birth control decisions by Minnesota politicians.

With Barrett’s appointment, conservative Justices will outnumber liberals 6 to 3. A conservative high court not only threatens women’s

reproductive rights, but also gun safety, minority representation, voter protection, the Affordable Care Act, and existing climate-change reduction measures.

Kaiser believes that Supreme Court political imbalance will not affect current rulings, but she favors Supreme Court Justice term limits. Regarding Ginsburg: “Although she insisted, she was fine, she was sick, and I cannot believe she was able to perform her duties in her condition.” Pearson doesn’t believe term limits are necessary, although “it is factual to say that as we age, our cognitive abilities do become compromised.”

Unlike Pearson, Brinkman supports term limits, believing that “the Supreme Court has become too political.” Brinkman believes that “all representation matters”; “everyone deserves a voice.” In the midst of Ginsburg’s death, Coronavirus, California wildfires, hurricanes, and the 2020 national election, we can only hope that our judicial branch will remain impartial.



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A Historic Day for Venice as Barriers Prevent Flooding

BY REBECCA BEASLEY

FOR 1,200 YEARS, flooding has been a part of Venice the way snow is a part of St. Paul. Flood waters can become knee-deep, shops often close, and Venetians and tourists put on galoshes to keep their feet dry during the acqua alta high tide (October-January). Yet, on October 3, many shops were able to stay open and feet were able to stay dry thanks to the 78 new flood barriers called MOSE. The name is partly derived from the Italian name for Moses of the Bible in reference to his parting of the Red Sea. The barriers are spread across three different inlets to effectively protect Venice and surrounding areas from high tide.

The project has been in the works since 1984, although construction did not start until 2003. The completion of the project was a struggle due to various delays, cost negotiations, and political corruption. MOSE was first tested on July 10 of this year and was finally put to the test during high tide season at the beginning of October. “This was a historic day for Venice,” Mayor Luigi Brugnaro told CNN.

The barriers are designed to be invisible until they are raised for high tide. Water flow from the Aegean Sea is important for the lagoon in order or ships to pass through and to keep the ecosystem stable. MOSE is still a work in progress with a completion date set for December of 2021. However, environmentalists and Venetians worry that the flood barriers are only a temporary solution. MOSE was designed to protect from up to 3 meters of flood water, and with climate change impacting sea levels and tectonic plates causing Venice to sink, it might not be a permanent solution to Venice’s flooding.

Venice first decided to combat the flooding after the catastrophic 1966 flood. On November 4, during the acqua alta, rain and high tide combined to devastate Venice with 194 cm (over six feet) of flood waters. It is recognized as the worst flood in the history of Venice. Over ¾ of businesses were damaged or destroyed. This event triggered a series of efforts to help prevent these costly acqua alta waters from causing more damage.

MOSE has been a long-anticipated solution that may or may not last. While October 3 was a day of rejoicing without so much as a puddle in Venice, some Venetians expressed continued skepticism toward the barrier project. Due to the past delays, the cost of operation, and the impermanence of MOSE’s provision, these continued doubts are far from unreasonable. The best Venetians can hope for is a successful solution, even if it is short-term.