



Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO

May 23, 2005

Re: Filibusters and judicial nominations

Dear Senator:

The Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO (DPE) is a coalition of 25 national unions representing more than four million professional, technical, administrative support, and other highly skilled white-collar employees. On behalf of DPE, I am writing to ask that you oppose lessening the 60-vote requirement for cloture. I urge that you vote against the “nuclear option” or any effort to eliminate the filibuster on judicial nominations.

Unions affiliated with DPE have endorsed, supported, and worked with Senators from both political parties. Our urgent request to maintain the filibuster for the minority party is not a partisan one. We make this request to serve working Americans and our families, to avoid extremism, and to encourage compromise.

The attacks on the 60-vote requirement are an ill-conceived effort to ram through extremist judicial nominees who attack worker protections. The Senate has confirmed the overwhelming majority of President Bush’s judicial nominees – 96 percent. In fact, the rate of judicial vacancies is at its lowest level in 14 years. The tiny minority of nominees who face filibustering are on record against the programs and protections – including job safety, wage and hour safeguards, and a right to organize in unions – that matter most to working Americans.

The filibuster has provided an essential and traditional part of the Senate’s checks and balances. Power in the executive and legislative branches changes hands. No party should be able to pack the courts with ideological extremists. If the courts are to retain respect, they must focus not on ideology, but on our laws. Abandoning a central procedure of the U.S. Senate is a poor way to convey that message.

To honor the interests of working families and our nation, I urge that you maintain Senate tradition and sustain the filibuster. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Paul E. Almeida
President