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Senate Judiciary Committee quotes

Democrats, Republicans sharply divided on Ashcroft

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, Jan. 16 — Comments by members of the Senate Judiciary Committee during the hearing on the nomination of John Ashcroft as attorney general:

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“JOHN ASHCROFT will continue to serve this nation with distinction. He knows that the legislators’ job is to write the laws and the attorneys general enforce those laws.” — **Sen. Kit Bond, R-Mo.**

“The issue boils down to this: When you have been such a zealous and impassioned advocate, how do you just turn it off? This may be an impossible task.” — **Charles Schumer, D-N.Y.**

“As someone who knows you as a person and who is familiar with your distinguished 30-year record of enforcing and upholding the law, I can tell you that I feel a great sense of comfort and a newfound security in

your nomination to be our nation's chief security officer." — **Orrin Hatch, R-Utah.**

"Senator Ashcroft has often taken aggressively activist positions on a number of issues that deeply divide the American people. He had a right to take these activist positions. We have a duty to evaluate how those positions would affect his conduct as attorney general." — **Patrick Leahy, D-Vt.**

"I am confident that as attorney general he will enforce all the laws to the best of his ability, whether he helped enact them or not. I hope that these hearings will not be about whether the nominee agrees with each senator on every issue. After all, he is the president's choice and the president makes the ultimate policy decisions." — **Strom Thurmond, R-S.C.**

"During Senator Ashcroft's quarter century in public service, he has taken strong positions on a range of important issues in the jurisdiction of the Justice Department. Unfortunately and often, he has used the power of high office to advance his personal views in spite of the law of the land." — **Edward Kennedy, D-Mass.**

"I, for one, will make my decision based on facts, not innuendo and rumor and spin. I will not let special interest groups with an agenda far out of the mainstream hijack the Judiciary Committee. ... At this point, I see absolutely no legitimate reason why he should not be confirmed." — **Charles Grassley, R-Iowa.**

"I approach the process prepared to give deference to the president's choice. The president is entitled to surround himself with the people he trusts. This deference, however, does not rise to the level of blind acceptance." — **Herb Kohl, D-Wis.**

"Let me also repeat my conviction, as this hearing begins, that voting records and conservative ideology are not a sufficient basis to reject a Cabinet nominee, even for attorney general." — **Russ Feingold, D-Wis.**

"I think at the end of the day one thing is very clear. There have been two interesting assertions made with respect to Senator Ashcroft by opponents. The first is that he has very strong convictions, faith and belief in God. Indeed, he does.

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The second is that he may not enforce the law and the Constitution. Well, the second assertion is at odds with the first. You can be assured that when John Ashcroft places his hand on the Bible and swears to uphold the laws and the Constitution, that he will do that on behalf of the people of the United States of America.” — Jon Kyl, R-Ariz.

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