

Loretta Lynch supporters hold 'pray-in' on Capitol Hill to urge a vote on her confirmation

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WASHINGTON (RNS) African-American women of faith joined other women and political leaders in a "pray-in" Wednesday to call on Republicans to stop delaying the confirmation of attorney general nominee Loretta Lynch.

"We're standing before dead ears and asking you to open them up right now, God, that they might hear you," said Barbara Williams-Skinner, co-chair of the National African-American Clergy Network. "That they would wake up now from a dead sleep, unaware that America, Americans of all types and backgrounds, are united behind the fundamental concept of fairness."

President Obama nominated Lynch, the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York, in November, but her confirmation process has stalled on Capitol Hill.

In addition to prayers, the women leaders calling for a vote on Lynch said they will start fasting until a decision is made, and they invited women of all backgrounds as well as men to fast, too. They are joining with Al Sharpton's National Action Network in a "Confirm Lynch Fast."

NAN Executive Director Janaye Ingram asked that participants contact Senate offices when they normally would be eating. Fasters were expected to refrain from food one day at a time and be replaced by others the next day.

Several congresswomen, including Democratic House Judiciary Committee members Reps. Sheila Jackson Lee of Texas and Judy Chu of California, stopped by the pray-in, and at least one pledged to fast.

"I'm joining the fast," said Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D., N.Y.). "I'm joining the petition drive. I'm joining the prayers and I'm joining all of you. This should happen

yesterday.”

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.), was the key object of protest—and sometimes prayer—by the dozens of women gathered around a microphone not far from his office.

Some recalled the recent celebration of Easter, when Christians believe a stone was rolled away during Jesus’ resurrection, as they sought divine intervention.

“We call upon our Creator God today to move the stone named Mitch McConnell that stands between Loretta Lynch and her confirmation,” prayed Leah Daughtry, an ordained elder of the Southeast District of the House of the Lord Church and the CEO of the 2016 Democratic National Convention. “We ask you to move the stone. We ask you to shift the atmosphere. We ask you to soften hearts.”

Asked for a response to the pray-in, Don Stewart, McConnell’s deputy chief of staff, said a vote on Lynch can occur as soon as Democrats end a filibuster on an anti-trafficking bill, which they have blocked because of its anti-abortion language. Stewart said a procedural vote is scheduled on that bill on Thursday.

Stewart said the delays in the confirmation process were not totally in McConnell’s hands because Democrats were still in control of the schedule during the first two months of her confirmation process.