

## **THE SENATE CONFIRMATION PROCESS: IT'S NOT OVER UNTIL IT'S OVER**

The United States Senate confirmation process follows a standard series of events from initial nomination to ultimate confirmation. The milestones below overview the path to potential confirmation, but timing can vary significantly based on the political climate, your background as a nominee, and the political makeup of the congressional committee.

*Tip #1: If you work in the private sector, consider taking a leave of absence to manage the confirmation process and mitigate potential conflicts of interest. If you continue to work, remember your performance is under heightened scrutiny, but treat that as an opportunity to demonstrate your aptitude for the government position.*

### **NOMINEE'S FILE**

Following initial nomination, you must fill out questionnaires provided by the congressional committee tasked with your hearing, complete paperwork for your FBI background check, fill out financial disclosure forms, and provide information to assist in the White House vetting process. The committee will also issue advance policy questions ("APQs") you must answer and return for the committee's review before the hearing. APQ answers should be coordinated with the White House.

*Tip #2: Clean up your social media and be fully transparent. You should understand every line of your financial disclosure. It is important to prepare your family to expect an invasive process, but distracting web chatter and blog postings should be ignored.*

### **COMMITTEE INVESTIGATION**

The committee will review all files you submit, your answers to the APQs, and information compiled by the White House vetting process. The committee's staff will review the results of the nominee's FBI background check. During the committee investigation, working with the White House, a nominee often will make "office calls" to meet with relevant senators and committee staff members. These office calls provide you with an opportunity to build relationships with Senate offices and to answer their questions. If the committee determines there are no outstanding issues, a hearing is scheduled.

*Tip #3: Be knowledgeable about the senators' priorities and make as many office calls as you can; listen about 80% of the time, and speak for about 20% ("80:20 Rule"). You should never presume confirmation and instead qualify your responses with "if confirmed." It is good practice to follow up after an office visit with a thank you to staff and the Member, and to maintain relationships throughout and after the nominations process.*

### **HEARING**

While some positions may not require a nomination hearing, a hearing presents an opportunity to answer questions from a small committee and increases the likelihood of a smooth confirmation

*This information summarizes LCWINS' Session 5: The Senate Confirmation Process: It's Not Over Until It's Over, moderated by Jamie Jones Miller and featuring panelists General Lori Robinson, Ann Elise Sauer, and Algene Sajery. For more information, visit us at <https://www.lcwins.org/>.*

vote by the Senate. The hearing usually begins with your opening statement followed by committee Member questions directed to you. After the committee Members have asked their questions and the hearing has concluded, the Members may submit questions for the record (“QFRs”), which you must answer in writing and return to the committee before the committee will hold a vote. QFR answers should be coordinated with the White House. The committee then holds a “mark-up” vote to determine if it will present the nomination and its recommendation to the full Senate for a confirmation vote. If the committee approves and there are no outstanding issues, your nomination is reported to the Senate floor and a confirmation vote may be scheduled.

*Tip #4: Always be respectful. You should request a “murder board” rehearsal to prepare and avoid being surprised or contradicting an APQ in the hearing; work with the White House Office of Legislative Affairs, LCWINS, and subject matter experts as key resources throughout your preparation. Practice your opening statement and introduce your family in your opening statement. You should read the headlines the morning of the hearing. Remember the microphone is on all day.*

#### **CONFIRMATION VOTE**

The full Senate may hold a vote to confirm whether they will advise and consent to your nomination.