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Judge O'Connor Makes Courtesy Call on Capitol

By LYNN ROSELLINI
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 14 — Sandra Day O'Connor sat down between Senators Howard H. Baker Jr. and Robert C. Byrd this afternoon and immediately scored a political point.

"Senator Byrd," Judge O'Connor said, addressing the minority leader, a man who considers himself an authority on the Senate, "tell me a little about the history of this great institution."

Senator Baker, the majority leader, broke into laughter, saying, "Judge, you don't know what you've just asked!"

Senator Byrd just smiled. Then he congratulated Judge O'Connor, not on her nomination to the Supreme Court but on her confirmation by the Senate, "which I feel will be forthcoming."

The Courtesy Ritual

In her first afternoon on Capitol Hill, Judge O'Connor, who if confirmed would be the first woman to serve on the Supreme Court, proved herself particularly adept at a peculiar Washington ritual: the courtesy call.

This is the custom that requires nominees of the executive and judicial branches to travel to Capitol Hill to woo members of the legislative branch, particularly those who sit on pertinent committees. It is a time for smiles and handshakes, not for substantive discussions.

"It's going just fine, thank you," Judge O'Connor, of the Arizona Court of Appeals, said as she breezed down a Capitol hallway this afternoon, her heels clicking on the marble floor. On her right was William French Smith, the Attorney General. On her left was Senator Baker.

Also accompanied by a mob of photographers and reporters, Judge O'Connor visited, among others, Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee; Senators Barry Goldwater and Dennis DeConcini from her native Arizona; Representative Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. of Massachusetts, the Speaker of the House, and Representative Robert H. Michel of Illinois, the House minority leader.

'It Could Be Unanimous'

Here is what they said:
Senator Thurmond, whose committee will hold hearings on her nomination

by President Reagan: "I think she'll be confirmed. I expect to support her."

Senator Baker: "It could be unanimous."

Senator Byrd: "I intend to support her. I was much impressed."

Senator DeConcini: "She told me she was opposed to abortion, and that's enough to satisfy me."

Judge O'Connor herself was saying little in public about her nomination. She acknowledged, for example, that her position on abortion was a "very sensitive subject," but she declined to discuss anti-abortion groups' criticisms of votes she cast while a state Senator in Arizona.

Planning Strategy

On arrival yesterday from Phoenix, Judge O'Connor was driven directly to the White House for a meeting with the Attorney General and members of the President's Congressional liaison staff to plan strategy for the confirmation process.

At 9 A.M. today she was at the Justice Department for a meeting with Mr. Smith and others that lasted four hours. A spokesman said they discussed whom on the Hill she should call on, what she might be asked and what problems might come up.

While they were meeting, anti-abortion groups demonstrated against her nomination in front of the White House. Although she did not meet with any Senators today who have voiced concern about her nomination on the basis of this and other issues, she is expected to do so later in the week.

At one point this morning, Judge O'Connor and Mr. Smith emerged for a picture-taking session in a department conference room. Appearing nervous and tight-lipped, Judge O'Connor gave clipped, controlled responses to even the most innocuous questions.

What had she and Mr. Smith discussed?

"We're planning my schedule for the week," she said evenly.

How does she feel about her trip to the Hill?

"It's a great pleasure to have the opportunity to meet with so many distinguished members of the Senate."

Does she feel a bit like a debutante, being introduced to all these people?

"No, I don't feel like a debutante."



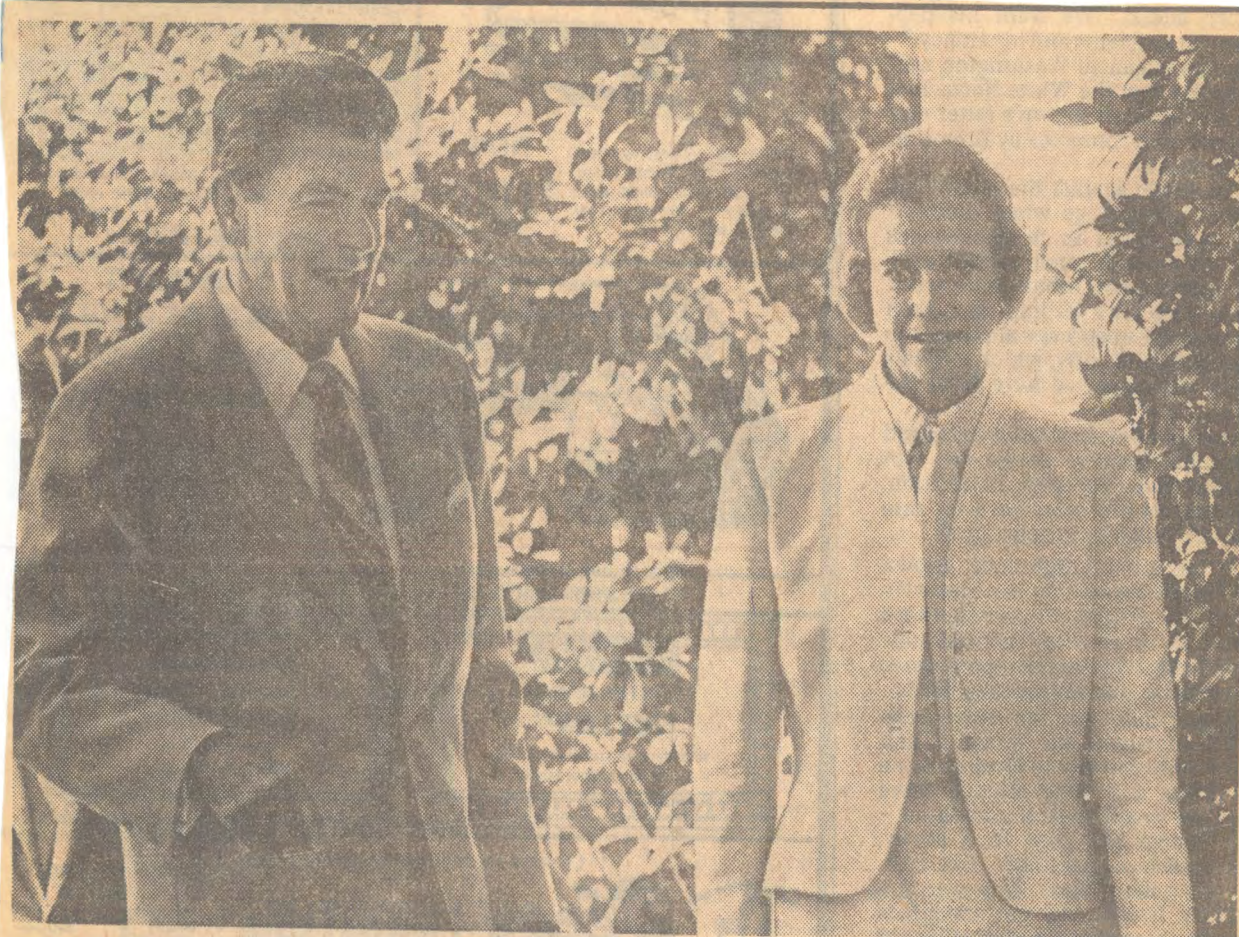
Supreme Court nominee Sandra D. O'Connor sits with President Reagan and Attorney General William French Smith under trees in the Rose Garden. Story on A8.

By Margaret Thomas—The Washington Post



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O'Connor Meets With Reagan

Supreme Court nominee Sandra O'Connor is escorted through the Rose Garden yesterday by President Reagan after he introduced her to the press. She will resume her "courtesy calls" on members of the Senate today. (Story, A-5)

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UPI photo

President Reagan sits with Sandra O'Connor in the Rose Garden during a courtesy call.

O'Connor vows to follow existing high court rules

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sandra O'Connor was quoted Wednesday as saying that whatever her personal views, she believes Supreme Court justices should follow existing high court rulings — including one that legalized abortion.

In a 1973 decision, the Supreme Court said abortion is covered by privacy rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

In her second day of a somewhat frenetic tour among the powerful of Washington, O'Connor met with President Reagan and various members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, including Sen. Charles Mathias of Maryland.

Reagan and Mathias joined Senate leaders in predicting easy Senate confirmation of O'Connor to become the

first woman Supreme Court justice.

The quiet O'Connor met five Republican senators Wednesday, including Mathias, Orrin Hatch of Utah, Roger Jepsen and Charles Grassley of Iowa and Rudy Boschwitz of Minnesota.

Meetings are scheduled with Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and Jesse Helms, R-N.C., and others Thursday.

At one point, O'Connor — accompanied by aides, security men and a half dozen reporters — found herself stuck in an elevator which stubbornly refused to stop at a floor in a Senate office building.

Eventually, the elevator was abandoned and the entourage walked to Grassley's office, her destination. Grassley said he spoke about abor-

tion with O'Connor for five minutes and she expressed the view that it was subject which could be handled by the Congress.

Saying he had not made up his mind how he would vote, Grassley said he believes she is a "strict constructionist" who believes in interpreting the Constitution, and not legislating from the court.

Mathias, a moderate Republican who often is at odds with the conservative majority on the Judiciary Committee, said he learned during his 40-minute meeting with O'Connor that she believes Supreme Court justices should follow existing high court rulings — including those on abortion.

"She made it clear she would apply the law," said Mathias. "We were in total agreement."

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O'Connor says justices should follow existing rulings

Washington (AP) — Sandra Day O'Connor was quoted Wednesday as saying that whatever her personal views, she believes Supreme Court justices should follow existing high court rulings.

That includes the 1973 decision which said abortion is covered by privacy rights guaranteed under the Constitution.

In the second day of her tour among Washington's elite, O'Connor met with President Reagan and Senate Judiciary Committee members.

"We're delighted to have her here and look forward to when she'll be here,

you might say permanently," Reagan said just before meeting with O'Connor, Vice President George Bush and Attorney General William French Smith.

Asked whether his comments amounted to a prediction of Senate confirmation, Reagan replied: "Yes. Yes, it is."

Conservative critics including anti-abortion organizations oppose O'Connor because they believe she cast a number of votes indicating support for legalized abortions while she was a member of the Arizona Senate.

O'Connor has declined to answer questions publicly on abortion or other substantive and controversial issues.