

Bush Urges Senate to Confirm Picks for Federal Posts

By Holly Rosenkrantz

President George W. Bush said the U.S. Senate must promptly vote on his backlog of some 200 nominees, including three for the Federal Reserve Board, and stop treating them like ``political pawns."

``The confirmation process has turned into a never-ending political game where everyone loses," Bush said in a statement at the White House. ``It is clear that the process is not working."

The vacancies to be filled also include two on the White House Council of Economic Advisers and 28 judgeships. Some nominees have been waiting more than two years, Bush said.

``The three-member Council of Economic Advisers is down to one person, which makes for lonely council meetings," Bush said.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said yesterday that senators are reluctant to vote on many nominees because approval would put them in office well past Bush's presidency. To confirm them ``would greatly limit the ability of a new president to change the direction of those boards through new appointments," he said.

Reid said Democrats won't allow Bush's nominees to fill three vacant Federal Reserve posts for full 14-year terms.

``Democrats, and I think the majority of Americans, think that the nation desperately needs a new direction on the economy," he said. ``I don't think they want to ensure that the legacy of the president's bad economic policies live on for 14 years through his Fed nominees."

Fed Nominees

The Senate Banking Committee has delayed voting on Bush's Fed nominees, with lawmakers expressing concerns about their ability to protect consumers from the abusive lending practices that contributed to the subprime mortgage crisis.

The nominees are Fed Governor Randall Kroszner, whose term officially ended Jan. 31, Capital One Financial Corp. executive Larry Klane and Virginia community-banker Elizabeth Duke. Kroszner can continue to serve at the Fed until a successor is appointed. Bush today urged the Senate to confirm them ``as soon as possible."

``At a time of important decisions for our economy, it is irresponsible for the United States Senate to leave positions unfulfilled," he said.

Bush also called on the Senate to confirm his nominees to the federal bench who, he said, will rule by the letter of the law, not the whim of the gavel."

'Artificial Vacancies'

Glenn Sugameli, senior legislative counsel at Earthjustice, a Washington environmental group, said Bush's judicial nominees are too extreme to be confirmed by the Senate.

"He created artificial vacancies by choosing pending nominees because they will not be confirmed," he said. "He refuses to even discuss suggestions of confirmable, mainstream nominees."

Bush isn't the first president to face challenges in getting his judicial nominees confirmed. Previous presidents have also had a mixed record. In former President Bill Clinton's last year in office, a Republican Senate confirmed only eight of 25 appeals-court nominees. At the end of Ronald Reagan's presidency, a Democratic Senate only approved seven, leaving eight slots unfilled.