

Republicans vow to block Barack Obama's apex court pick

24/02/2016 21:44 by admin

Washington: Setting the stage for a major confrontation with President Barack Obama, Senate Republicans have vowed not to hold confirmation hearings for his Supreme Court nominee to replace a dead conservative judge amid a tense battle for the White House.

Democrats blasted the "obstructionist and unprecedented" move setting the stage for a major confrontation between America's finest African-American president and a Republican controlled legislature.

"I can now confidently say the view shared by virtually everyone in my conference is that the nomination should be made by the president who the people elect in the election that is underway right now," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said on Tuesday.

"In short, there will not be action taken," he said outraging the Democrats.

Obama has said he intends to nominate a judge to take the place of Justice Antonin Scalia on the nine judge bench and expects the Senate to hold hearings and a vote to confirm the new justice, but Republicans say the next president should make the nomination.

Scalia's February 13 death has left the nine judge bench now evenly divided 4-4 among liberal and conservative judges.

McConnell's comments came shortly after Republican members of the Senate Judiciary Committee sent a letter to the Senate leader saying no hearings will be held until Obama leaves office.

"Senator McConnell and the Republican leaders said point-blank they are not going to exercise their Constitutional responsibilities," Senator Dick Durbin, Assistant Minority Leader said criticising the move.

"This has never happened before -- never ... and now, McConnell is going to have to wear the collar for it."

Major cases before the apex court include access to abortion, and an Obama policy to prevent the deportation of undocumented immigrants who have children who are US citizens or lawful residents.

If the court splits 4-4, the decision of the lower court stands, but does not become nationwide precedent.

Meanwhile, a Fox News poll released earlier this month found that registered voters want Obama and Senate leaders to "take action to fill the vacancy now" by a margin of 62 percent to 34 percent.

A Pew Research Centre poll released on Monday found a majority of Americans (56 percent) say the Senate should hold hearings and vote on Obama's choice to fill the vacancy, with 38 percent saying they should not hold hearings until the next president takes office.

- IANS