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To the Editor:

President Bush, whose campaign pledged the creation of a “new tone of respect and bipartisanship (in Washington),” has in fact driven partisanship to astounding new levels. Now the President and Senate Republicans are pulling out all the stops to pack the courts with extremist judges not just by nominating right-wing ideologues, but also by seeking to undo two hundred years of Senate rules with allegations that the country is experiencing a judicial vacancy “crisis.” However, in fact, there are currently less than half as many vacancies on the bench than when President Bush first took office. As of June 25, the Senate had confirmed 134 of 136 Bush judicial nominees.

Further, the U.S. Senate’s role to advise and consent on the President’s nominees was clearly stated in the Constitution. To that end, the rules the Senate follows to meet this constitutional requirement must include and protect the rights of the minority party, including the use of the filibuster. Instead of blaming Democratic opponents for standing up for their principles – and for protecting the rights and liberties of the American people – the President should be consulting with senators to establish a bi-partisan process for moving forward on federal judicial nominations.

President Bush needs to submit moderate nominees, as opposed to the right-wing ideologues currently being put forward, and restore balance and responsibility to the judicial nomination process. Our courts – and our country – depend on it.

Respectfully submitted,

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