

O'Connor Courts Political Leaders

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sandra D. O'Connor, still silent on abortion and other substantive questions, is courting the nation's political leaders in hopes of defusing any opposition to her Supreme Court nomination.

The 51-year-old Arizona appeals court judge, whose past stances on abortion and women's rights have come under fire from conservative groups, was scheduled to meet with several key senators on Capitol Hill this afternoon, after a morning visit with Attorney General William French Smith at the Justice Department.

After their meeting, Mrs. O'Connor and Smith spoke briefly to reporters.

"We're in planning my schedule for the week," she said, adding, "It's a great pleasure to have the opportunity to meet with so many members of the Senate."

Mrs. O'Connor was asked about the issue of abortion. She acknowledged that it was a "sensitive area," but declined further comment.

Smith said, "We don't anticipate there should be any problem at all" with Mrs. O'Connor's confirmation. He said controversial issues, such as abortion, will be addressed "in due course."

After meeting reporters, Smith said, Mrs. O'Connor was to be introduced to senior staff members of the Justice Department.

Then, accompanied by the attorney general, she was to begin her courtesy calls on Capitol Hill.

"I've tried to be candid and will continue to try to be so" in Senate Judiciary Committee hearings that now may be delayed until September, Mrs. O'Connor said Monday at an airport news conference arranged by White House aides.

"I simply don't know what I'll be asked" during this week's meetings, she said.

But she refused to discuss such issues as abortion and said Supreme Court nominees generally do not say how they would vote in specific cases which might come before them.

Among those Mrs. O'Connor was scheduled to meet was Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., who has expressed skepticism about her selection, and Sen. John East, R-N.C., a Judiciary Committee member who has said he would not support a Supreme Court nominee who agreed with the 1973 decision legalizing abortions.

Mrs. O'Connor's specific views on that decision are not known.

She also was to meet with Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., the Judiciary Committee chairman, Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker, other Senate leaders and various members of the Judiciary panel.

Sources said there was a tentative plan for Mrs. O'Connor to meet with a group of about 20 conservative senators to persuade them that her views on abortion and other social issues were in line with their own.

President Reagan's choice of Mrs. O'Connor to replace retired Justice Potter Stewart and become the first woman on the Supreme Court was denounced last week by the Moral Majority, the Conservative Caucus and 19 other conservative and anti-abortion groups. They claimed the nomination would threaten the alliance that helped elect Reagan last fall.

The groups claimed that the Justice Department may have "covered up" information about Mrs.



SANDRA O'CONNOR, an Arizona judge, answers questions for reporters on her arrival Monday at Washington National Airport. (AP Laserphoto)

O'Connor's alleged pro-abortion stance during her days in the Arizona Senate, or that Mrs. O'Connor may have been less than forthcoming about her voting record on abortion and support for the Equal Rights Amendment.

As Mrs. O'Connor met with the attorney general, a group of anti-abortion protesters staged a demonstration against her nomination in front of the White House.

Some of the signs the protesters were carrying said: "O'Connor — a person for all liberals," "Va. says no to 'O,'" "Mr. President, your staff misled you."

The protest was sponsored by a group called March for Life.

Mrs. O'Connor said she believed the Capitol Hill meetings were customary for Supreme Court nominees.



JUSTICE ON THE MOVE — Judge Sandra O'Connor, President Reagan's nominee for the Supreme Court, arrived in Washington Monday. She is scheduled to meet Tuesday in strategy sessions with Attorney General William French Smith and presidential congressional liaison Max Friedersdorf. A visit with President Reagan also is slated. Later she plans a trip to Capitol Hill to meet with her home-state senators.

Ellen Goodman

He's Done It Again

BOSTON—You might have called it an eye-opening week.

First President Reagan, a man notoriously myopic toward women, actually found one to nominate for the Supreme Court. Sandra O'Connor was not only a woman, he said, she was a "person for all seasons."

Then we watched as controversy over this person brewed between the extreme right and the merely right. To see Barry Goldwater representing the moderate middle was enough to clarify anyone's vision.

The coalition of groups alternately labeled "pro-family" or "moral majority" disapproves of Sandra O'Connor. They maintain that her voting record as majority leader in the Arizona Senate was not pure enough to pass the test of the Republican Party Platform.

That platform, you may recall, demanded judges who "respect traditional family values and the sanctity of innocent human life." But anti-abortion groups, the Moral Majority, Inc., and others criticized O'Connor as suspiciously pro-abortion and pro-ERA.

This attitude was enough to put Goldwater's famous jaw out of joint. "I'm getting a little tired of people in this country raising hell because they don't happen to subscribe to every thought that person has," he said. "You could offer the Lord's name for some of these positions and you'd find some of these outfits objecting..."

In any case, it was quite a stroke for Reagan, in the midst of all the budget cuts, to find an appointment criticized as too "liberal."

Meanwhile, O'Connor's real record turned out to be about as middle-of-the-road as you could walk. It offers little cause for exhilaration or hysteria on either side.

Those who are against abortion notice that O'Connor voted against prohibiting the use of tax funds for abortion, and also voted against a bill urging Congress to pass the so-called Human Life Amendment.

But those who are in favor of keeping abortion legal notice that O'Connor



By Auth for The Philadelphia Inquirer

seems to have personally assured the president she is against abortion.

Those opposed to the Equal Rights Amendment point out that O'Connor was one of those who introduced the amendment into the Arizona legislature in 1972. Those in favor of the ERA point out that she backed off this support.

As a judge of a state appeals court, O'Connor has not ruled on any of these hot social issues. Indeed, her lack of a record, the fact that she is neither an advocate nor an activist in any cause, is a definite advantage to her confirmation.

So O'Connor is not only a person for all seasons but for all reasons.

To begin with, she helps Reagan with his "woman problem." Women were his weakest supporters at the polls and they are still weakening. Sandra O'Connor can help stop this collapse because she is a woman, and a woman with moderate social views.

But she is a safe choice because of her conservative legal views. As someone opposed to an activist judicial role, she is unlikely to use the bench for social change.

At the same time, her appointment solves Reagan's other "problem." The president made a commitment to the

far right, to people who would replace the Constitution with the Bible according to Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell, and return to the most traditional view of men and women. But he also had a commitment to appoint the most qualified woman he could find to the Supreme Court.

Talk about your double binds. It is virtually impossible to find a highly qualified woman who would be ultra-conservative on social issues. A woman jurist by definition is in a non-traditional role. A woman lawyer of experience and intelligence has inevitably become aware of inequality.

As a young graduate of Stanford Law School, Sandra O'Connor, for example, was refused a position in every major law firm in Southern California except one. That one offered her a job as a secretary. She remembers.

So what we have here on the way to confirmation hearings is this person. Sandra Day O'Connor, as much of a conservative as you can find in a qualified woman, and as much of a feminist as you can find in a conservative.

By gum and by grudging, Reagan's done it again.

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Nominee Gets a Hand

A White House aide cleared a path through cameramen for Supreme Court nominee Sandra Day O'Connor yesterday as she arrived in Washington, D.C., hoping to head off conservative opposition to her approval by the Senate. She will meet with Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., chairman of the Senate Judiciary Com-

mittee, and Jesse Helms R-N.C., a leader of Republican conservatives in the Senate. The Moral Majority and anti-abortion organizations have expressed opposition to O'Connor because they believe she supports legalized abortions and ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment for women.