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Barack Obama

On the Passing of USSC Justice Antonin Scalia

delivered 13 February 2016, Rancho Mirage, California



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Good evening, everybody.

For almost 30 years, Justice Antonin "Nino" Scalia was a larger-than-life pre[sence] on the bench: a brilliant legal mind with an energetic style, incisive wit, and colorful opinions.

He influenced a generation of judges, lawyers, and students -- and profoundly shaped the legal landscape. He will no doubt be remembered as one of the most consequential judges and thinkers to serve on the Supreme Court. Justice Scalia dedicated his life to the cornerstone of our democracy: the rule of law. Tonight, we honor his extraordinary service to our nation and remember one of the towering legal figures of our time.

Antonin Scalia was born in Trenton, New Jersey to an Italian immigrant family. After graduating from Georgetown University and Harvard Law School, he worked at a law firm and taught law before entering a life of public service. He rose from Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Counsel to the Judge on the D.C. Circuit Court, to Associate Justice of the Supreme Court.



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A devout Catholic, he was the proud father of nine children and grandfather to many [28] loving grandchildren. Justice Scalia was both an avid hunter and an opera lover -- a passion for music that he shared with his dear colleague and friend, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg. Michelle and I were proud to welcome him to the White House, including in 2012 for a State Dinner for Prime Minister David Cameron. And tonight, we join his fellow justices in mourning this remarkable man.

Obviously today is a time to remember Justice Scalia's legacy. I plan to fulfill my constitutional responsibilities to nominate a successor in due time. And there will be plenty of time for me to do so, and for the Senate to fulfill its responsibility to give that person a fair hearing and a timely vote. These are responsibilities that I take seriously, as should everyone. They're bigger than any one party. They are about our democracy. They're about the institution to which Justice Scalia dedicated his professional life, and making sure it continues to function as the beacon of justice that our Founders envisioned.

But at this moment, we most of all want to think about his family; and Michelle and I join the nation in sending our deepest sympathies to Justice Scalia's wife, Maureen, and their loving family -- a beautiful symbol of a life well lived. We thank them for sharing Justice Scalia with our country.

God bless them all, and God bless the United States of America.