

June 21, 2005

Frist Doubts New Bolton Vote, Then Says He'll Try Again

By [DAVID STOUT](#)

WASHINGTON, June 21 - Senator Bill Frist, the leader of the Senate's Republican majority, abruptly reversed himself after a meeting with President Bush today and said he would schedule another vote on the nomination of John R. Bolton to be ambassador to the United Nations.

"The president made it very clear that he expects an up-or-down vote," Dr. Frist said at the White House, after lunching with the president.

"The decision in talking to the president is that he strongly supports John Bolton, as we know, and he asked that we to continue to work," Dr. Frist said. "And we'll continue to work."

"It's not dead," he said of the nomination. "It is going to require some continued talking and discussion."

Only a short time before, at the Capitol, Senator Frist said he would not schedule another vote because it was pointless.

Dr. Frist's reversal came as the White House reiterated its determination to stand by Mr. Bolton a day after his Senate supporters fell six votes short of the number needed to close off debate and move to a vote on confirmation.

"We continue to urge the Senate to give John Bolton an up-or-down vote," President Bush's chief spokesman, Scott McClellan, said. "He enjoys majority support," Mr. McClellan said. "I think that is clear to everybody."

In fact, Mr. Bolton does have majority support. Fifty-four senators, including three Democrats, voted on Tuesday to shut off debate. But 60 are needed to end a filibuster, a political fact of life that Dr. Frist acknowledged today before his meeting with President Bush.

"At this juncture, we have to go back to the president and see what the decision he's going to make is," Dr. Frist said before lunch. As for another vote on Mr. Bolton, the senator said, "that's been exhausted."

President Bush has the power to install Mr. Bolton as United Nations envoy by appointing him while Congress is not in session, during its summer break, for example. Such a recess appointment would be effective until the end of the next session of Congress, about 18 months from now.

Mr. McClellan did not respond directly when asked whether the president was considering a recess appointment. "We will continue to talk with the Senate leadership," Mr. McClellan said. "It's clear that the Democratic leadership is not interested in finding a middle ground."

A State Department spokesman also called again for Mr. Bolton to be confirmed. Calling Mr. Bolton "eminently qualified," the spokesman, Adam Ereli, said of Mr. Bolton, "Once he gets to New York he will show everyone what a good choice he was and how effective he can be working on behalf of the United States."

Mr. Ereli answered somewhat indirectly when he was asked whether installing Mr. Bolton by recess appointment would undermine his standing at the United Nations. "We continue to believe that the way forward on this is an up-or-down vote," Mr. Ereli said.

But the Senate minority leader, Harry Reid, Democrat of Nevada, said it would be significant if Mr. Bolton were made the envoy through a recess appointment. "What it means is, we'll be sending to the United Nations a person who could not be approved by the Senate of the United States."

Noting that the nominations of two earlier United Nations ambassadors, John D. Negroponte and John Danforth, had sailed through confirmation, Mr. Reid said: "There are hundreds of people out there whom we would approve as quickly as we did Negroponte, and as quickly as we approved Danforth. But they send us this flawed candidate because of the ideological bent the White House has."

Most Democrats oppose the Bolton nomination. They say that as an under secretary of state, he bullied subordinates and tried to manipulate intelligence assessments for his own ends. They say, too, that the White House has not been forthcoming with information about all of Mr. Bolton's official actions.

Mr. Bolton's supporters acknowledge his hard-driving style and say it is just what is needed to make the United Nations more effective. They also say the senators have all the information they need to make a decision on the nominee.

Other Republican leaders joined Senator Frist at the White House today for lunch with the president. In addition to the Bolton nomination, they discussed the energy bill and other pending legislation.

Mr. McClellan said the White House has no intention of withdrawing Mr. Bolton's nomination. "We continue to urge an up-or-down vote," Mr. McClellan said.

Should he eventually get that up-or-down vote, Mr. Bolton would probably prevail. There are 55 Republican senators and only one, George Voinovich of Ohio, voted against him on Monday. But the nominee's Democratic critics have shown no sign of backing down.