

DIFI AND THE SILLY SEASON OF SENATE COMMITTEE MUSIC CHAIRS

A little over an hour ago, there was some rather notable news tweeted out by CNN:

Intel cte's @SenFeinstein will give up the chair and move to Judiciary, source tells @CapitolHillCNN. @SenatorReid to announce today

I have talked to both sources at both the Senate Judiciary Committee and Personnel offices and have yet to hear a denial. This is, then, significant news as to a complete reshuffling of key Majority Senate Leadership assuming it continues to bear out.

First off, a tenured Senator like Feinstein does not leave a high value Committee Chairmanship without another, or something higher, on the offer. CNN said she it is to "move to Judiciary". But DiFi has long been a member of the SJC, that can only portend she will then become Chairman of Judiciary.

Ryan Grim at Huffington Post has also picked up this shuffle, and beat me to the punch by a few minutes:

If Feinstein does take over leadership of the Judiciary Committee, that could ease the passage in the Senate of a renewed assault weapons ban, which was passed under President Bill Clinton in 1994 but expired in 2004. The shooting rampage on Friday in Newtown, Conn., in which 20 children and six adults were murdered by a gunman with a military-style assault weapon and high-capacity magazines, has renewed calls for stricter gun control legislation.

On Tuesday, speaking in the Capitol before the party's weekly caucus lunch, Feinstein told reporters who had asked her whether she will jump to Judiciary, "Keep tuned. I think it is [going to become open], and I think it'll happen."

On Monday, Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) who was the chairman of the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee, passed away at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Now that Inouye's post is empty, Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) is rumored to be looking at taking over Appropriations – in turn opening up the leadership slot at Judiciary. Feinstein could then move from her current spot as chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee to chair Judiciary.

That is good, fast reporting and coincides with what I can discern. And Appropriations Chair is a long time traditional home for the Senate Pro-Tem, which Pat Leahy became with yesterday's passing of Inouye.

So, what about SSCI? Next in line would, by seniority, be Jay Rockefeller. But, as Mother Jones' Nick Baumann pointed out, Rockefeller gave up leadership at Intel nearly three years ago to take over the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee helm, and there is no reason to think he would double back. That gave a brief glimmer of hope that Ron Wyden might get the nod at SSCI, but HuffPo's Grim, in a tweet, thinks he is more likely to take over the helm of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee for the outgoing Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico, who did not seek reelection. That would mean the next senior Democrat on SSCI as Barbara Mikulski of Maryland.

Now, if I were Wyden, I would want the SSCI job over Energy. It is likely most progressives would like him there as well, which is why the smart money likely says Reid talks him into the

Energy Chair.

So, we are into the Congressional equivalent of Formula One silly season; i.e. the end of the year shuffling of drivers before the season is really over. The one real wildcard here is Wyden.