

MISTAKING A NOMINATION FOR AN APPOINTMENT

Katrina vanden Heuvel set off the twitters with this:

WH (& others) indicate Elizabeth Warren
2 be nominated next week to head
Consumer Financial Protection Agency.
Kudos 2 all who worked 4 her.

While I agree with vanden Heuvel that those who have worked thus far to make sure Warren gets the position deserve kudos, they don't, IMO, deserve a celebration, yet.

After all, given what happened with Dawn Johnsen, a rumored nomination is a long shot from getting the position. Especially in the wake of Obama's recess appointment of Donald Berwick to run Medicare, ostensibly because the health care reform bill presented some urgency that necessitated a recess appointment.

How is fixing our financial system less of an emergency? How, given the number of people still underwater on their mortgages, is this not critically urgent?

And anyone celebrating anything less than Warren in the position is accepting less than the Administration can give, on its own.

According to the bill's language, the Treasury Secretary has sole authority to build the new agency before it's ultimately transferred to the Federal Reserve. That includes anointing a person to head the effort on his behalf, and under his authority. The interim head would serve until the President's nominee is confirmed by the Senate.

That person could be Elizabeth Warren.

And the legislation doesn't appear to contain a deadline for a Presidential nomination, experts say, which means Warren could start the agency from scratch, put her people in, begin cracking down on predatory and abusive lenders, and initiate a culture that would put consumers' interests above those of the nation's most powerful financial institutions.

In short, she could set a tone the agency will follow for the next several years without the administration needing to fight a potentially drawn-out confirmation battle that could stall Obama's pro-consumer agenda.

Sure, Liz Warren's appointment might excite a bunch of people in the middle class heading into mid-terms, even as it pisses off the much less numerous bankster class. Even assuming giving the middle class something to be happy about is a bad thing politically, why would incumbency be one?

The Administration can put Liz Warren on the job, today, to deal with the emergency of the ongoing abuse of real people by the banksters. Or, the Administration can decide doing that is not all that important, and it has the time to wait for the do-nothing Senate to take action.

But I would submit that rumors of a nomination are no cause for celebration when we know nothing is preventing the Administration from putting Warren in the position, today. Because anything short of an outright appointment—particularly given the rumors that suggest the WH agrees Warren is the best person for the job—is simply dismissing the urgency of the ongoing financial crisis for the middle class.