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Senate to likely get Gonzales nomination

The Judiciary Committee is expected to take its final vote on Attorney General nominee Alberto Gonzales' nomination on Wednesday.

Evan Vucci
Associated Press
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WASHINGTON — While Democrats plan to allow quick committee approval of attorney general nominee Alberto Gonzales, they plan extensive debate in the Senate on his qualifications and participation in the Bush administration's war on terror.

The Judiciary Committee is expected to take its final vote on the nomination on Wednesday.

Democrats don't have enough votes in the Judiciary Committee or on the Senate floor to stop Gonzales' confirmation on an up-or-down vote. Republicans control the committee by 10-8, so unless GOP senators decide not to show up or to vote against Gonzales, the nomination will move on to the full Senate for confirmation.

The Senate is not expected to vote until next week at the earliest.

Gonzales, who served as White House counsel during President Bush's first term, would replace John Ashcroft if confirmed. He would be the nation's first Hispanic attorney general.

Democrats complain that Gonzales was evasive with his answers to their questions about White House policies in the war on terror. They have used his nomination and that of secretary of state nominee Condoleezza Rice to criticize the Iraq war and the treatment of foreign prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, in Afghanistan and at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

"I think that a man who gave the legal advice to the president to allow this to take place is someone that deserves to be talked about on the Senate floor," Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid of Nevada said Tuesday.

Gonzales has said he supported extending the expired federal assault weapons ban. He also told senators he wanted Congress to reauthorize the Patriot Act this year, despite complaints that it is too intrusive.