

Jeffords will back Roberts for chief justice

Published: Thursday, September 29, 2005

By Erin Kelly
Free Press Washington Writer

WASHINGTON -- Sen. Jim Jeffords revealed Wednesday that he will vote to confirm John G. Roberts Jr. as chief justice of the United States.

Roberts is expected to be confirmed easily today by the full Senate. He is slated to be sworn into office Friday.

Jeffords, an outspoken independent and frequent critic of President Bush, joins fellow Vermont Sen. Patrick Leahy in supporting Roberts. Leahy, the senior Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, announced his decision last week.

"My decision to support Judge Roberts did not come easily," said Jeffords, who served as Vermont's attorney general and is the son of the former chief justice of the Vermont Supreme Court.

Jeffords said he studied Roberts' record and his testimony before the Judiciary Committee to try to determine if Roberts could set aside personal beliefs to follow the law. He concluded that Roberts could.

"From the record we have, nobody has raised a question on whether Judge Roberts has the proper legal experience or character to be the next chief justice," Jeffords said. "It also appears to me from a review of his judicial decisions that Judge Roberts has not allowed his judicial temperament or ideology to influence his decision-making process."

Jeffords said he also was heartened by Roberts' promise before the Judiciary Committee that he would "be vigilant to protect the independence and integrity of the Supreme Court."

"I trust he will stay true to these words during his tenure as chief justice," Jeffords said. "History will be the judge."