

## Donald Trump's dream casting for America's next SCOTUS justice: Amy Coney Barrett

By Chris Cillizza

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(CNN) — For Donald Trump, image is everything.

How you look is a major marker for how you will do in Trump's world. You need to look the part for him to imagine you in the job. Your personal story has to stand out in the crowd.

"Presentation is very important because you're representing America not only on the national stage but also the international stage, depending on the position," Jason Miller, a spokesman for the Trump transition, [told The Washington Post way back in December 2016](#). Wrote [WaPo's Philip Rucker and Karen Tumulty](#):

*"To lead the Pentagon, Trump chose a rugged combat general, whom he compares to a historic one. At the United Nations, his ambassador will be a poised and elegant Indian American with a compelling immigrant backstory. As secretary of state, Trump tapped a neophyte to international diplomacy, but one whose silvery hair and boardroom bearing project authority."*

That "central casting" view of the world goes for reality TV contestants, Cabinet picks and, yes, likely even Supreme Court justices.

By that logic, Trump's pick to replace retiring Justice Anthony Kennedy -- which he is set to announce July 9 -- is simple. It's Amy Coney Barrett.

Coney Barrett is, among other things:

1. A woman
2. A mother of seven
3. Young (in her mid-40s)
4. A person of faith
5. Reliably conservative, particularly on social issues

This, from [CNN's Jeff Zeleny](#), speak to the casting-call nature of Trump's search:

*"President Trump is increasingly intrigued about selecting the first female conservative Supreme Court justice, people familiar with the search say, repeatedly telling advisers that he likes the idea of making such a historic choice in a climate where women on the other side of the political aisle are playing such a pivotal role. ...'Can you imagine?' the president said with a smile during a conversation about the prospect of selecting a woman for the pivotal spot on the court."*

If you combine Trump's love for making history (everything is record-setting or never been done before) with his emphasis on appearance (the next SCOTUS nominee has to have immaculate academic credentials, yes, but also, the robe simply has to look like she -- or he -- was born to wear it) then there is a big, flashing red arrow pointing at Coney Barrett.

Trump allies are insisting that he is poring over past decisions, judicial philosophies and the like in making the decision -- [as this Bloomberg piece illustrates](#) -- but if past is prologue, he will make a decision primarily on his gut, and his gut tends to be largely informed by the look of things.

That doesn't mean, however, that picking Coney Barrett would be without some strategic side benefits. The largest of those is the fact that [she was confirmed by the Senate to the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals in October 2017](#). [She received 55 votes](#), including from Democrats Joe Manchin (West Virginia), Joe Donnelly (Indiana) and Tim Kaine (Virginia) as well as several moderate Republicans like Shelley Moore Capito (West Virginia), Susan Collins (Maine) and Lisa Murkowski (Alaska).

While that group could make the argument that the Supreme Court is different than a Court of Appeals, it's a tough political position to be in given their past support. And a Coney Barrett nomination could also make life difficult for the likes of Democratic Sens. Heidi Heitkamp (North Dakota) and Claire McCaskill (Missouri), both of whom are running for reelection in states that Trump won by double digits in 2016.

In short: The Coney Barrett pick makes a whole lot of sense. (Maybe too much sense for someone who loves the expectation-upsetting swerve of a mid-season surprise...)

