

March 2, 2016

Opening Statement of Senator James Lankford

Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee Hearing:

Nominations of Hon. Patrick Pizzella to be a Member, Federal Labor Relations Authority, and Julie Becker, Steven Berk, and Elizabeth Wingo to be Associate Judges, D.C. Superior Court

Good morning. Today we will consider the nominations of Ms. Julie Becker, Mr. Steven Berk, and Ms. Elizabeth Wingo for the position of Associate Judge on the Superior Court for the District of Columbia, as well as the nomination of Mr. Patrick Pizzella to be a member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority. The Committee takes these nominations very seriously, and so we are pleased to have strong nominees before us.

The Superior Court for the District of Columbia is a busy place, with more than 100,000 cases heard each year. I am proud to say that these three Superior Court nominees will mark the 5th, 6th, and 7th that the committee has considered in just the past year. This is more than triple the number of nominees who received hearings during the entire 113th Congress.

Julie Becker is a native of Detroit, Michigan. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Michigan, and her law degree from Yale Law School. After graduation, Ms. Becker clerked for then-Judge Sonia Sotomayor on the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals. Currently, Ms. Becker is a supervising attorney at Legal Aid where she has spent the past fourteen years.

Steven Berk is originally from Chicago, Illinois. He received his undergraduate degree from Washington University in St. Louis, he has a master's degree from the London School of Economics, and a law degree from Boston College Law School. Mr. Berk has worked at the SEC, as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia and practiced at several prestigious law firms.

Elizabeth Wingo is a native of Washington, D.C. She received her Bachelor of Arts from Dartmouth College, and her law degree from Yale Law School. Following law school, she clerked for Judge T.S. Ellis in the Eastern District of Virginia. Ms. Wingo worked as a prosecutor at the U.S. Attorney's Office in the District of Columbia and for the District of Columbia's Attorney General's office before being appointed as a magistrate for the Superior Court in 2006.

In addition to these impressive resumes, Ms. Becker, Mr. Berk, and Ms. Wingo possess the necessary legal skills and judgement to serve the District of Columbia.

Mr. Pizzella is a native of Rochelle, New York. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of South Carolina. After graduation, he served in a variety of government entities, including: GSA, the Small Business Administration, the Department of Education, and the Department of Labor. In 2013, he was appointed to the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

Committee staff reached out to a variety of these nominees' colleagues and affiliates, who spoke highly of them. Committee staff also had the opportunity to interview Ms. Becker, Mr. Berk, Ms. Wingo, and Mr. Pizzella on an array of issues, ranging from notable cases to community service and pro bono work. They have thoughtfully and competently answered each question to our satisfaction.

To date, the Committee has found you to be qualified for the positions you have been nominated, I look forward to speaking with you a bit more today on your experience and accomplishments and how you intend to bring them to bear in a fair and impartial manner for the FLRA and the District of Columbia.