

Testimony of

# **The Honorable Orrin Hatch**

March 27, 2003

Today the Committee has the privilege of considering the nominations of six outstanding lawyers to be federal judges. I commend President Bush for nominating each of them, and I look forward to their testimony.

The first nominee from whom we will hear is Edward Prado, who has been nominated for a position on the Fifth Circuit. He is a native of San Antonio, Texas, and has served his community, state, and nation in a variety of ways. After graduating from both college and law school at the University of Texas, Judge Prado began his legal career in 1972 as an Assistant District Attorney in the Bexar County District Attorney's Office. In 1976 he accepted a position with the Federal Public Defender's Office for the Western District of Texas where he represented indigent criminal defendants in the federal courts.

During 1980 he served as a Texas state district judge, filling the unexpired term of an incumbent. In this position he presided over several hundred cases and felony criminal trials. Judge Prado was unanimously confirmed by the Senate in 1981 and appointed as United States Attorney for the Western District of Texas. In 1984 he was again unanimously confirmed by the Senate, this time to serve as a United States District Judge for the Western District of Texas. His eighteen years on the federal bench, plus prior service as a Texas state judge, have given him the experience and background to make an outstanding Fifth Circuit judge.

In addition to Judge Prado, we will hear from five nominees for the federal trial court bench. The first of our three district court nominees is Richard Bennett, who has been nominated for the District of Maryland. Mr. Bennett is a distinguished practitioner whose career has included two terms of service with the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Maryland, first as a line prosecutor and then as the United States Attorney. He has also spent considerable time in the private practice of both civil and criminal litigation. Mr. Bennett's outstanding legal skills have been widely recognized, including mention in the 2003-2004 edition of *The Best Lawyers in America*.

Our nominee for the Western District of Louisiana is Dee Drell. Upon graduation from law school at Tulane University, Mr. Drell joined the United States Army Judge Advocate General's Corp, where he gained experience as both defense counsel and prosecutor. Upon completion of

his military service, he embarked on a distinguished career in private practice while still devoting time to extensive pro bono work, including the provision of legal services to Central Louisiana AIDS Support Services, AIDS Law of Louisiana, Inc., and Shepherd Ministries, an ecumenically-based religious organization that provides services to the disadvantaged.

Leon Holmes, the final district court nominee we will consider today, is widely respected for his intelligence, his legal skills, and his commitment to the rule of law. A distinguished graduate of Duke University, where he received a doctorate in political science, and the University of Arkansas law school, where he graduated first in his class, Mr. Holmes is currently a partner with the Little Rock firm of Quattlebaum Grooms Tull & Burrow, specializing in complex business litigation, torts, and appellate practice. I have no doubt that he will make a fine addition to the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas,

In addition to these three district court nominees, we will also hear from two exceptional nominees for the Court of Claims. One of them is Susan Braden, who began her legal career in the Antitrust Division of the Justice Department. After seven years at DOJ, she spent five years at the Federal Trade Commission before joining the private sector, where she has practiced law for the past 18 years. Her practice has focused on antitrust law, complex civil litigation, international trade matters for industrial clients, and computer software litigation.

Our other nominee for the Court of Claims is Charles Lettow. An esteemed federal litigator, Mr. Lettow has shown his commitment to public service, having been a law clerk for both the Ninth Circuit and the U.S. Supreme Court and having served as Counsel to the Council on Environmental Quality in the Nixon Administration. Since 1973 he has worked with the firm of Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton, focusing on federal litigation and environmental cases.

I am pleased to have these nominees before the Committee today, and I look forward to hearing from them.

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