

Statement of

The Honorable Jeff Sessions

United States Senator
Alabama
June 4, 2004

REMARKS

NOMINATIONS HEARING FOR JUDGE MICHAEL WATSON

U.S. SENATOR MIKE DEWINE

JUNE 4, 2004

It is my pleasure and honor today to introduce Judge Michael H. Watson, who currently serves on the Tenth District Court of Appeals in Franklin County, Ohio. President Bush has nominated Judge Watson to serve as a federal judge in the Southern District of Ohio.

Before I speak about Judge Watson, I would like to welcome to the Committee several people who are here to support him -- Judge Watson's wife, Lori Watson; his two Staff Attorneys, Dorci Gass and Carrie Wambaugh; and his Administrative Assistant, Karen Waldrop. Thank you all for being here and welcome. I'm sorry that none of Judge Watson's three sons could make it today. Grant and Tommy, both at Ohio State, and Harrison, at Thomas Worthington High School, are all taking or preparing for finals this week.

Judge Watson has had a long and distinguished career as a public servant. He has been a judge on the Tenth District Court of Appeals in Franklin County since Governor Bob Taft appointed him in May 2003. From 1996 to 2003, Judge Watson served on the Franklin County Common Pleas Court, a position he was appointed to by then Governor George Voinovich and to which he was re-elected twice. In Ohio, the Common Pleas Court is the highest trial bench. It is the court that tries all the major civil and criminal cases. During his last three years on the trial court, Judge Watson served as Administrative Judge with responsibility of the administrative management of the 16-member court and its staff. He dealt with, literally, thousands of cases during his time as a state trial court judge.

Before serving on the bench, Judge Watson worked for the office of then Governor George Voinovich -- first as Deputy Chief Legal Counsel and then, from 1994 to 1995, as Chief Legal Counsel. Prior to that, he was Chief Legal Counsel to the Director of the Ohio Department of Commerce. Judge Watson also spent several years in private practice, focusing primarily on personal injury litigation, employment disputes, worker's compensation, and criminal defense.

Without question, Judge Watson has had an impressive legal career. But, what really impresses me about him is how hard he has worked throughout his life. Judge Watson has genuinely lived the American dream by working hard and overcoming the odds. He came from a working-class family, where he was the first in his family to graduate from college. And now, he is here before us as a nominee to be a federal district court judge. When I get to my questioning, I want to ask

Judge Watson about his humble beginnings, and I'd like him to fill in the gaps for us. But for now, I just want to say to Judge Watson that you should be very proud of your achievements.

Judge Watson will be a fine addition to the District Court. In his time on the Ohio Court of Common Pleas and on the Ohio Court of Appeals, Judge Watson has distinguished himself through his thoughtful legal reasoning and his great integrity. This experience and his temperament make Judge Watson highly-qualified for the Federal District Court.