



Senator Feinstein Calls for Swift Approval of Judiciary Nomination for Judge Lawrence O’Neill

September 12, 2006

Washington, DC – *U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today called on the Senate Judiciary Committee to help alleviate the judiciary emergency in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California by swiftly approving the nomination of Judge Lawrence O’Neill.*

Senator Feinstein noted the tremendous overload of cases in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California, during her introduction of Judge O’Neill at his Judiciary Committee Nomination Hearing. Senator Feinstein also highlighted Judge O’Neill’s qualifications, including his current position as Magistrate Judge in the Eastern District, which he’s held since 1999.

The following is Senator Feinstein’s introduction of Judge O’Neill before the Senate Judiciary Committee:

“Thank you Mr. Chairman. I greatly appreciate your accommodation of my request for expedited consideration of Judge Lawrence O’Neill’s nomination to the Eastern District of California.

It is my pleasure to introduce Magistrate Judge Lawrence O’Neill, whose confirmation would help to alleviate a judicial emergency in the Eastern District of California.

The Fresno Division, to which Judge O’Neill is nominated, is suffering from a particularly acute overload of cases.

Judge Oliver Wanger and Senior Judge Anthony Ishii are currently the only judges on the Fresno Division of the Eastern District. They share a caseload of 2,928 active cases. This is an average caseload of 1,464 per judge – which is the highest caseload in the nation. By contrast, the average weighted caseload nationally for a federal district court judge is 524 cases.

The people of Fresno and the Eastern District truly need the help that Judge O’Neill will provide.

Fortunately, Judge O'Neill is uniquely qualified to step in and offer immediate relief to the Eastern District, because he has been a Magistrate Judge in the District since 1999. In addition, for the last 17 years, Judge O'Neill has been a judge in California, spending 10 years as a Superior Court Judge in Fresno before becoming a Magistrate.

He is a home grown Californian. He was born in Oakland, California and attended school in California. He received a bachelor's degree in Criminology from the University of California, Berkeley, a master's degree in public administration from Golden Gate University, and a law degree from Hastings College of Law.

Before attending law school, he was a police officer for the City of San Leandro. I believe this additional perspective will prove an asset on the bench.

I was pleased to learn that the American Bar Association unanimously declared Judge O'Neill to be 'Well Qualified,' the ABA's highest rating.

In California, we have developed a bipartisan process for selecting federal district court nominees. Under this system, a committee of lawyers, including Democrats and Republicans, recommends qualified applicants to the President.

The fact that Judge O'Neill's nomination was a product of this commission gives me confidence that he comes to the bench without an ideological agenda, and is prepared to serve all the people of California.

Although Senator Boxer could not be here today, she asked me to relay her support for Judge O'Neill's nomination. She will be entering a separate statement on Judge O'Neill's nomination into the record.

Judge O'Neill, I congratulate you on this nomination, and I look forward to you serving the people of California with wisdom, integrity, and humility."

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