



REPUBLICAN NATIONAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

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Today's Hearing For Michael Wallace for Fifth Circuit

Bi-Partisan Letter of Current and Former ABA Members Questions ABA's Role in Judicial Rating Process

Washington, DC: Today the Senate Judiciary Committee is scheduled to hold a hearing, which in theory is for Michael B. Wallace of Mississippi to be a judge for the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. Unfortunately, the issue at today's hearing will not be Michael Wallace, whom all impartial observers agree is well qualified, but rather about the American Bar Association (ABA). It appears the ABA has begun to rate nominees based not on their qualifications but rather for whom they once worked.

As detailed in the accompanying letter signed by 228 current and former members of the American Bar Association from both political parties, the ABA's recent ratings of now DC Circuit Judge Brett Kavanaugh and Michael Wallace raise serious questions about the objectiveness of the current ABA Committee that is charged with reviewing nominees.

Republican National Lawyers Association (RNLA) Vice President for Communications and former Co-Chair of an ABA Committee Tricia Paoletta stated:

It appears as if Judge Kavanaugh's and Michael Wallace's ABA ratings (or re-ratings) are based not on their outstanding qualifications and careers as lawyers, but rather on the work they did as political appointees within Republican Administrations. Is this political payback by liberal leaders within the ABA who opposed the work of Kavanaugh's and Wallace's bosses?

As the letter to the ABA states regarding Kavanaugh: "We are troubled by reports that this re-rating took place in consultation with a United States Senator who had been investigated by Judge Kavanaugh when he was serving as an assistant to Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr." On Wallace: "Was the question of the recusal of Standing Committee Chair Stephen Tober addressed given that Mr. Tober had passionately opposed Mr. Wallace's efforts as a director of the Legal Service Corporation? Should there be a higher recusal standard for the Chair given his opportunity to influence and pressure other members of the Committee?"

Fortunately for the ABA there is an easy solution. As the letter states: "The ABA could easily remedy this problem by allowing for more transparency in the review process, establishing a clear recusal policy for conflicts of interest, and selecting members for the Standing Committee who reflect the broad judicial philosophies of the entire legal community." Hopefully the ABA will heed the call for reform.

The RNLA is made up of over 3,000 lawyers and law students nationwide who are dedicated to the principle that lawyers need an independent and fair judiciary free to perform their jobs. The RNLA also has established a National Judicial Advocacy Panel comprised of lawyers who are available for media interviews throughout the country. More information on this panel, including biographies and contact details, can be found at www.rnla.org/Speakers.asp or visit www.rnla.org for general information about the RNLA.

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