

Opening Statement of Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
Hearing on Nominations
May 26, 2021

Today, we're hearing from 6 nominees, one for the circuit, one for the district, and four executive nominees. The nominee for the Federal Circuit, Tiffany Cunningham, seems well qualified. The Federal Circuit is a specialty court that mostly hears patent cases. It does also hear some other appeals too, though, including federal takings. I will have some questions for Ms. Cunningham on that.

The district nominee, Margaret Strickland, is another of President Biden's criminal-defense judges. This is the fourth criminal-defense judge we've considered. I want to be clear, there's nothing necessarily wrong with being a criminal-defense attorney. Some of President Trump's excellent judges—like Paul Matey on the Third Circuit, Raag Singhal in Florida, and Clifton Corker in Tennessee—were criminal-defense attorneys. They were out to protect their clients' constitutional rights—all of them.

Groups like Demand Justice have made it clear that's not what they want. They seem to think these criminal-defense judges will defund the police from the bench. I think we should try to find out what kind of criminal-defense judge we're getting: a Bill of Rights Judge or a Demand Justice Judge.

We also have some executive nominees. Former Attorney General Milgram and Mr. Polite seem to have relatively broad support. Mr. Polite in particular has received strong letters of support from Republicans like Brian Benczkowski and Alice Fisher, who aren't the usual suspects supporting Democrat nominees. That's pretty impressive.

I have concerns regarding Ms. Jaddou's nomination to be Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). During her time as Chief Counsel at USCIS during the last several years of the Obama Administration, the agency created various parole programs that are not consistent with the language or intent of the Immigration and Nationality Act. Should she be confirmed, I have concerns about her willingness to further stretch the limits of parole authority. I hope to get some clarification of her views during today's hearing. I'm also troubled by statements she has made on other issues such as the use of Title 42 expulsion authority at the southern border, funding for immigration enforcement agencies and asylum law.

I believe all of these issues are worthy of thorough questioning and examination before the Committee. I regret that the format of today's hearing will hinder our ability to explore each of those topics in more detail. Ms. Jaddou should expect more on these topics in written questions.

Lastly, we have Mr. Chipman. Ever since Mr. Chipman was announced I have been hearing from alarmed constituents who care about their rights under the Second Amendment. Mr. Chipman seems to have worked for every prominent gun control group in the country. He's been described by CNN as "a fierce advocate for gun control." There isn't a liberal hobbyhorse on guns that he hasn't ridden—whether it's misleading the public about modern sport rifles, arguing against

popular magazine sizes or advocating for universal background checks. Of particular concern is the contempt with which he seems to view ordinary Americans who buy or carry firearms. To pick just one example, he said last year, “If you keep [the gun store] open, there’s the risk of first-time buyers who are largely buying out of fear and panic and untrained.”

ATF is a significant law-enforcement agency. We mostly hear about it when it messes up, whether it’s Waco, Operation Fast and Furious or the Chicago stash-house scandals. But day-to-day ATF plays a significant role in the legal trade of firearms in this country. Many see putting a committed gun control proponent like Mr. Chipman in charge of ATF is like putting a Tobacco executive in charge of the Department of Health and Human Services or Antifa in charge of the Portland Police Department. I hope he can alleviate those fears.