

**Prepared Statement by Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa  
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee  
Executive Business Meeting  
January 18, 2018**

Good morning. We have a full agenda today, and I understand we'll need to have roll call votes on most of the nominees before us.

Of course, most of these nominees already received Committee votes last year, and I assume that Members will likely vote the same way they did last year. So, in order to keep things moving this morning, I won't spend time discussing the nominees we considered last year. However, we do have several nominees up for a vote for the first time today, and I'd like to discuss a few these nominations briefly.

Today, we're considering three nominees to Circuit Courts: Elizabeth Branch to the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit, Kyle Duncan to the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit, and David Stras to the 8<sup>th</sup> Circuit. I was very impressed with all 3 nominees during their hearings and believe they will all make excellent federal appellate court judges.

Justice Stras has served on the Minnesota Supreme Court since 2010 and has received wide bipartisan support from the Minnesota legal community. He also teaches law at the University of Iowa in my home state. Many of the faculty—including even liberal professors—strongly endorse Justice Stras' nomination.

Judge Branch also has impressive judicial experience. She's served on the Georgia Court of Appeals since 2012 and has participated in over 1,500 cases. This appellate experience should serve her well as she transitions to the federal appellate court.

And Mr. Duncan was the first Solicitor General of Louisiana. He has argued before the Supreme Court as well as filed over 20 amicus briefs.

I could discuss in great length the merits of all these nominees, but in the interest of time this morning, I'll simply submit for the record a few letters we've received in support of their nominations.

We're also voting on 4 District Court nominees for the first time today, and I'll make a brief comment on one of them. Charles Goodwin has been nominated to serve as a District Judge for the Western District of Oklahoma. He currently sits on this Court as a Magistrate Judge.

In doing their evaluation of Judge Goodwin, the American Bar Association rated him as "not qualified." Given Judge Goodwin's experience this rating was a head-scratcher to me. It was also surprising to Joe Heaton, the Chief Judge for that Court. When he learned about the ABA's rating, he wrote to the Committee to commend Judge Goodwin to us.

He writes:

“I believe that he has served ably as a U.S. Magistrate Judge and he continues to have the full confidence of the district judges... I disagree with the Standing Committee’s conclusion. Based on his service here and his experience as a partner and practicing lawyer... I believe Judge Goodwin is plainly qualified to be a U.S. District Judge... I believe the opinions I’ve expressed here are generally reflective of the views of all [my district judge colleagues].”

I’m going to base my vote for Judge Goodwin’s nomination today off of the recommendation of Chief Judge Heaton, rather than the ABA’s unmerited evaluation. I hope that my colleagues will do the same this morning.

I’ll now turn to Senator Feinstein for her remarks.