

To make matters worse, the SPLC's leadership—Abudu included—apparently haven't learned their lesson. “[O]ver the past decade the SPLC has targeted an increasing number of policy groups with whom it has policy disagreements. Any group that disagrees with the SPLC about positions it advocates is deemed to be evil and worthy of destruction,” laments the coalition letter.

In addition to its inflammatory designations, the SPLC has amassed a war chest to fund its left-wing activism totaling \$570 million as of October 2020. Its holdings are, to put it mildly, highly unusual for an American non-profit company. Among investments listed in its 2020 financial statements are \$162 million in non-U.S. equity funds, \$23 million in “arbitrage funds,” \$89 million in private equity funds, and \$7 million in long-short funds. The coalition letter observed, “The SPLC looks more like a hedge fund than a public interest legal and political activist group.”

Amy Sterling Casil, the CEO of the consulting firm Pacific Human Capital, remarked regarding its transfer of millions of dollars to foreign bank accounts that “I’ve never known a US-based nonprofit dealing in human rights or social services to have any foreign bank accounts.” She added, “I know of no legitimate reason for any US-based nonprofit to put money in overseas, unregulated bank accounts” and called the SPLC’s practice “unethical.” The watchdog group CharityWatch gave the SPLC a grade of “F.”

In addition to Abudu’s shady professional associations, she consistently has taken far-left positions in litigation. Perhaps the most prominent were cases Abudu argued while at the ACLU’s Voting Rights Center, for example, making unsuccessful challenges to felon voting provisions in Mississippi, Arizona, and Tennessee. As legal director of the ACLU of Florida, Abudu unsuccessfully challenged the state’s requirement that a felon’s voting rights could be restored only after all fines, fees, and restitution imposed as part of the felon’s sentence had been paid. The Eleventh Circuit, sitting en banc, found no evidence to support Abudu’s claim of intentional racial discrimination. Undeterred, Abudu joined several other groups to submit Florida’s law to the United Nations Committee on Human Rights for review of human rights violations.

Since joining the SPLC, Abudu has maintained her ties with the ACLU of Florida and continued her losing track record in court with an unsuccessful Eighth Amendment claim against Florida’s Department of Corrections for not fully accommodating a transgender inmate’s “social-transitioning” requests.

The Biden administration and congressional Democrats continue to make scurrilous allegations of suppression of voting rights in Republican-led states, cherry-picking them over Democrat-led states with more stringent election rules and brazenly trying to weaponize the courts to do their partisan bidding. And Biden’s Department of Justice has specifically targeted Georgia, where Abudu would sit if confirmed, alleging the state’s recent election law violated the Voting Rights Act and engaged in racial discrimination. If you believe a Judge Abudu would fairly evaluate Georgia’s voting integrity laws according to the rule of law rather than her own agenda, I have a bridge to sell you.

[From AMAC, Feb. 15, 2023]

BIDEN’S RADICAL JUDGES

(By Robert B. Charles)

Watch the flank! Sometimes an assault on vital interests and values does not come head-on, but from an angle, on the flank. We just saw the Chinese slip a balloon across the

continent, figurative knife between the ribs. Domestically, the judiciary is a flank—but it matters. Biden and Democrat Senate are loading the federal judiciary with leftists, and it matters.

In the first year of his White House, Biden got the largest number of Article III federal judges confirmed of any president since Ronald Reagan. The difference is that many of Biden’s nominees aspire to concentration of federal power.

Broadly speaking, they tend to tip against traditional understandings and caselaw tied to unfettered speech, free exercise of religion, gun ownership, traditional understandings of family, parental prerogatives, due process, equal protection, and the 4th, 5th, and 6th amendments.

His recent nominees are often openly pro-abortion, no apologies for opposing Dobbs, happy to be activists—as they think that is what courts are for, correcting errors of the Founders, Congress, strict constructionists, textualists, and those who dare to think words have meaning.

While Trump got 234 federal judges appointed, that was playing catchup after Obama’s 329 judicial confirmations. Now, continuing the leftist attack on our judiciary, Biden has pressed increasingly radical judges—and one radical justice—to the federal bench.

When a Supreme Court nominee considers is controversial to publicly define a woman, simply declines to do so, something is wildly wrong with the process. Imagine Justices Sandra Day O’Connor (appointed by Reagan) or Ruth Bader Ginsburg (appointed by Clinton) not knowing what a woman is.

Indeed, I think one can say—for very different reasons, but with a basic understanding of and respect for biology—O’Connor, Ginsburg, Reagan and Clinton ALL knew the difference between men and women.

Now comes the latest rash of leftist nominees. After Biden nominated 98 Article III judges in his first two years, 51 still awaiting confirmation, his left-lurching party now controls the Senate, which is in charge of judicial confirmations.

Beyond this, we face 10 vacancies on federal circuit courts—a bench that manages all federal appeals short of the Supreme Court, plus 75 US district court vacancies. An added 27 federal judicial vacancies will arise before end of Biden’s term (four appeals, 23 district).

The part that causes a shiver is not these numbers, but the under- and un-qualified nature of those being nominated to important judgeships. As one observer noted, this seems to be Biden’s means for “paying back the left-wing dark money groups who spent over a billion dollars to help elect him.” He will get the Democrat-controlled Senate to sweep a raft of leftists onto the courts.

Can he really do that? Yes and no. On the one hand, another collection of unabashed leftists is about to be swept into available openings, likely soon confirmed by the Democrat Senate, most with a rich history of working with and for leftist causes.

These include nominees proud to have worked on left-leaning cases that pushed pro-abortion, antigun, anti-free speech, and anti-conservative causes and cases. They include those who championed radical positions advanced by Planned Parenthood, gun control groups, and those working to punish free speech and worship.

Last week two dozen nominees got through the Senate Judiciary Committee, headed for floor votes. Among those to watch are judges like Julie Rikelman, who was the “litigation director” for the “Center for Reproductive Rights,” headed for the First Circuit Court of Appeals. She literally litigated against Dobbs, and lost.

Another to watch is Nancy Abudu, who was a litigation director for the Southern Poverty Law Center—after time with the ACLU. She is destined for the 11th Cir. Court of Appeals.

Even the typically quieter Republican National Lawyers Association spoke against her which wrote that, “Her views goes beyond ... even progressive activists, and we see no reason to believe that she will be an impartial judge on the hot button issue of election law.”

A reality check will lower the blood pressure a bit, as these judges will not—in one fell swoop—tip the balance of these circuits, but the idea that judges who are unable to be impartial on such a basic issue as “election law” are being nominated—and confirmed—is worrisome.

In the end, the core question is—what can be done, in an age of polarized, often strangely off-the-mark thinking—to protect the federal bench from becoming, over time, radicalized?

The answer is a few important things. First, level-headed Senators can put holds on some of these nominees, tabling them for a time, if not indefinitely. This will also send a signal. For votes needed to tip the Senate balance, possibly on fossil fuels, law enforcement, support for Ukraine, and illegal immigration limitation—the point can be made to centrists like Joe Manchin: Radicals must be kept off the federal bench.

In the event that radical appointees violate ethical norms on the bench, impeachments can be initiated, driving home the point that political activism is disallowed for federal judges.

Additionally, hard-hitting hearings of nominees should be the norm, with radical, non-judicial behaviors, statements, and past actions forcing Senate Democrats to tough decisions. While accountability is hard, the effort is worthy—and even some Democrats may balk.

Last, all Americans need to think harder about the flanks. As the Communist Chinese continue testing our national security, the radical left tests our commitment to individual liberty. Good judges are “judicial” in temperament, not activist, not partisan, not political. Watch the flank!

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I yield the floor.  
The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PETERS). The Senator from California.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise today as chair of the Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water, and Wildlife to express my strong disapproval of Republican efforts to undermine the integrity and authority of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Now, around the world, scientists tell us that 1 million species face extinction, including 40 percent of animals in the United States. This is nothing short of a biodiversity crisis, one that will have dire impacts on the ecosystems around us and the clean air and clean water that we need to survive.

Yet, last week, for the second and the third time in just 2 weeks, Republicans passed a Congressional Review Act resolution to constrain the Fish and Wildlife Service and their ability to protect our planet.

Three times now we have had to stop all other business of the Senate and devote valuable floor time that we could have used to pass legislation to confirm or promote military leaders and

otherwise do the people's business. Instead, we had to stop to debate the merits of protecting threatened and endangered species from extinction. That is not a joke—for the folks watching at home—and this is not an exaggeration either.

Let's review. It was a half a century ago that Congress acknowledged the reality of habitat destruction and the threats to America's unique biodiversity. And, yes, Congress gave the Fish and Wildlife Service the power to administer a process for designating and protecting newly endangered species. Congress intentionally and purposefully handed the power over to experts in habitat loss and wildlife biologists—who are actually educated and trained—to determine which species are most at risk and what we need to do to protect them.

It is no different than how we regulate prescription drugs, for example. We rely on the FDA and their experts and their scientists to protect the American people rather than trying to individually legislate every single medication. Imagine trying to legislate every single medication in this body.

So the real effect of these CRAs is to set a precedent for personal grievances and for the folks who deny the science and prefer gridlock to prevail. Passage of these CRAs is the equivalent of saying that, whenever a powerful industry or a lone Member of Congress dislikes a rule that scientists at the Fish and Wildlife Service issue in the future, they are entitled to a vote to second-guess and overturn the actual experts.

I may be wrong, but I am not aware of any wildlife biologists currently serving in this Senate. At a time when more and more wildlife species are at risk of extinction, we can't constrain the ability of the Fish and Wildlife Service from following the science and issuing rules to protect them or, in the case of the critical habitat designation CRA, my colleagues are blatantly ignoring the realities of climate change and limiting our Nation's ability to react and respond in the years ahead.

I suggest that, rather than grinding Congress to a halt, those of us who voted to follow the process that Congress itself created is the responsible way to allow the scientists and experts to do their job. Rather than ignore the science of the climate crisis, I voted to live up to the responsibilities that we have as stewards of this great land.

And while this last week Senate Republicans got their way, I am proud to have a President in the White House who takes seriously our sacred responsibility to our planet and who refuses to overrule the experts and the scientists. But I also know that this is not the end of the CRAs and that our Republican colleagues will attempt to overrule the Fish and Wildlife Service and choose to put their personal grievances over progress in Congress.

So when that day comes again—because there will be future attempts—I will proudly, once again, stand with the experts and vote no.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, this week is National Police Week. It is an opportunity to show our gratitude to the men and women in blue who risk their lives every day for our safety, as well as honor those who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

This Police Week I want to tell a story of a police chief in my home State of Nebraska.

Local broadcast outlet KETV recently interviewed the new police chief of Ashland, a city of about 3,000 on the eastern side of the State. According to KETV, Chief Ryan Brady worked 19 days in a row at one point last year. He logged over 170 hours in a 2-week period. Chief Brady clocked more than 800 overtime hours last year. But he is on salary. So he is not paid for any of it.

I am amazed at Chief Brady's dedication to the job. He works day shifts, night shifts, and picks up his partners' shifts when they get sick.

But why does he have to do all that work? Why does he have to do so much? Well, because his department has encountered a staffing crisis. Between retirements and trouble recruiting, the Ashland Police Department has dwindled down to only a handful of officers.

Chief Brady told KETV:

Somebody's got to work. So the buck stops here. So, you know, if no one else can work, I work.

I have spoken with police officers and sheriffs all over my State, and I can tell you this is not a problem that is unique to Ashland. No, it is not even a problem unique to Nebraska. Severe police staffing shortages are affecting departments all across our country.

The Police Executive Research Forum found that agencies are losing officers faster than they can hire new ones. There were 47 percent more resignations in 2022 than in 2019, in addition to 19 percent more retirements over the same time period. That means that large groups of officers are leaving the force while few are trickling in. Understaffed staffs are doing their best to keep up with these changes, but there are also roadblocks we can help them remove when it comes to hiring.

Over the past year, I have worked with police departments across Nebraska, as well as national law enforcement groups representing departments across this country. From these conversations, I introduced the Recruit and Retain Act, which would help police departments tackle these staffing roadblocks.

This bipartisan bill would boost officer recruitment opportunities through the Justice Department's Community Oriented Policing Services hiring grants. These grants can keep departments afloat. But recruitment expenses like background checks, psychological evaluations, and other tests are not currently included in the eligible expenses. So this bill would allow COPS grants to cover these specific costs and make it easier to onboard new officers. Reducing the cost of hiring would go a long way in helping law enforcement raise staffing levels.

My bill would also establish the Pipeline Partnership Program, a new initiative aimed at fostering youth interest in law enforcement careers. Departments and local schools would work together to launch mentorship opportunities, job fairs, and other activities that give young people better insight into law enforcement work. This program would bolster community relationships. It would help to open up stronger local hiring pipelines for police departments too.

Finally, the bill would direct the Government Accountability Office to study both the causes of this latest recruitment and retention challenge as well as the effects they have on public safety.

I would like to thank Senator COONS for working with me on this bill for many months, as well as Senators CORNYN and KLOBUCHAR. It was great that we saw the Judiciary Committee pass this bill by voice vote today, and I look forward to its advancement.

I was also glad to join my colleague Senator CORNYN to help introduce two bills that further support law enforcement's tireless work. The Project Safe Neighborhoods Act of 2023 would reauthorize the Project Safe Neighborhoods program through fiscal year 2026. The PSN program is an effective bipartisan solution to violent crime that has been working since 2001.

In Nebraska, PSN coordinates enforcement and prosecution partnerships among Federal, State, and local law enforcement, in addition to involvement with Nebraska communities to bring violent offenders to justice.

The second bill, the Back the Blue Act, would protect police officers by creating new Federal criminal penalties for attacking law enforcement officers. Too often police officers are harmed rather than honored in our country, and it is time that we make a Federal statement that attackers will be punished.

Another vital area to continue addressing is the mental health of our police officers, who face daily strains from the intensity of their jobs. I am planning to reintroduce a bill that would direct the Department of Health and Human Services to create a publicly accessible online dashboard so that organizations, including law enforcement groups, can easily search for Federal funding opportunities that support mental health. Potential applicants would be able to search for the