

for the District of Columbia, withdrew from consideration for the seat in December 2017 days after a video clip showed him unable to answer basic questions about legal procedure.

Petersen, a graduate of the University of Virginia Law School, was a member of the Federal Election Commission since 2008 but had no trial experience.

His only connection to the Trump Administration was that his tenure on the FEC overlapped with that of White House counsel Don McGahn for about five years.

Petersen was one of three judicial nominees picked by President Trump to have withdrawn in that week amid criticism about their qualifications.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman CHARLES E. GRASSLEY told the White House to “reconsider” the nominations of the other two nominees, both of whom were reported to have endorsed positions or groups that embrace discrimination.

A day later, both nominations were pulled. This gross disregard for competence is inconceivable in any profession, much less our government.

One of the two withdrawn for discrimination was Brett Talley.

Talley had been rated “unanimously unqualified” for the post by the American Bar Association after an evaluation that questioned his experience.

Talley had never argued a case, or even a motion, in federal court, he testified.

Mr. Talley nevertheless won preliminary approval from the Judiciary Committee’s Republican majority to be a judge.

Even after Talley’s nomination advanced through the Senate Judiciary Committee on an 11–9 party-line vote, media reports and good government groups cast doubt on his credentials for the spot on the U.S. District Court in Alabama.

As he was awaiting a Senate floor vote, it emerged that Mr. Talley had not disclosed that he was married to White House Counsel Don McGahn’s chief of staff.

It was further publicized that he had failed to disclose that he had apparently written thousands of pseudonymous posts on a University of Alabama sports fan website, including one defending the early Ku Klux Klan.

Talley’s withdrawal is celebrated as a case in which civic awareness and activism by various groups from media to good governance organizations pressured the government to do the right thing.

One such organization that is critical to safeguarding fairness of justice in our courtrooms is the American Bar Association, which gave Talley the “unanimously unqualified” rating.

Since 1953, this venerable legal organization has played a critical, behind-the-scenes role in assessing judicial nominees and their fitness to serve on the bench.

By the end of President Trump’s first year, the ABA deemed at least four of Trump’s judicial nominees “not qualified.”

But with the ABA emerging as a major stumbling block in President Trump’s effort to transform the courts, our colleagues in the GOP accused the nonpartisan group of holding a liberal slant and is seeking to sideline it.

Instead of being equally concerned of the quality of judicial nominees put forth by this Administration, our colleagues chose to ignore the ABA and discredit the century-old group.

ABA President Hilarie Bass said the group is a “nonpartisan organization that has focused on legal issues and not politics” and that it has vetted thousands of judicial nominees “fairly and in a nonpartisan fashion” under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

However, our colleagues are engaged in a desperate charge against factual truth itself.

“The ABA’s record on judicial nominations has been highly questionable,” said Sen. TED CRUZ (R–Texas), a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, “it has demonstrated over past decades repeatedly partisan interests and ideological interests.”

Arizona Sen. JEFF FLAKE, who also sits on the Judiciary Committee and is a vocal GOP critic of Trump, added: “Not a big fan of the ABA.”

“It’s blatantly political,” Flake said. “Often. Not always.”

In a shift from the Obama Administration and a return to the policy of President George W. Bush, the administration decided earlier this year not to allow the ABA to review potential candidates before they were nominated.

Trump officials are abandoning the practice so Republicans can push through younger, conservative attorneys who may not have as much—if any—experience to a lifetime position on the bench.

Mr. Speaker, I stand today in opposition of the Trump Administration’s misguided and foolish judicial nominations.

I stand today as a woman, who fears for my fellow woman’s right to choose.

I stand today as a granddaughter of immigrants, who recognizes the value of immigration to our, society and national identity.

I stand today as an African American, who celebrates the progress our community has made in expanding civil rights in our nation, but recognizes the struggle yet left ahead.

I stand today as a mother and grandmother, who is determined to hold our courts accountable to safeguarding our nation’s civil liberties for generations to come.

I stand today as an American, because a judiciary that dispenses evenhanded justice is what defines who we are and what we stand for.

Mr. Speaker, fellow members of Congress, let us be unequivocally clear that it is our responsibility and our high call of service to our fellow citizens to defend the rule of law and preserve our courts as the bastion of justice in our nation.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the judicial branch serves as one of the key pillars of our democracy, charged with restraining both the legislative and executive branches from reaching beyond their constitutional authority first envisioned by our Founding Fathers. The importance of having qualified judges on the bench is not only vital to the judiciary, but also to the proper functioning of our system of checks and balances—and by extension, our democratic system. By stacking the courts with biased, unqualified judges, President Trump and Senate Majority Leader MCCONNELL are choosing party over their country in a manner that will cause enduring harm to the process and principles that we hold dear as a democratic nation.

The nomination of Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the United States Supreme Court is already a dangerous threat to longstanding precedent

on matters regarding civil rights, abortion, and government oversight. However, the lower federal courts are equally as important to the judiciary’s ability to protect the fundamental rights that we enjoy as Americans. President Trump has demonstrated time and time again through his nominations of extreme candidates that he has little to no regard for due process, and has every intention of leaving behind a lifelong legacy of stacking the courts to favor radical right-wing conservatism.

Mr. Speaker, the nominees being put forth by this Administration and the process by which they are being vetted is a wild and dangerous departure from regular order. Senate Republicans are knowingly sidestepping traditional vetting protocols in order to rush right-wing judicial nominees through the process before the American people can react. It is a misguided practice that places partisan politics over the needs of the American people, and I urge my colleagues in the Senate to oppose any unqualified nominee at every opportunity.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 5515, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019

Mr. THORNBERRY submitted the following conference report and statement on the bill (H.R. 5515) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2019 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of July 23, 2018, published in Book II.)

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana (at the request of Mr. MCCARTHY) for today on account of inclement weather affecting travel.

BILL PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported that on July 19, 2018, she presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bill:

H.R. 6042. To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to delay the reduction in Federal medical assistance percentage for Medicaid personal care services furnished without an electronic visit verification system, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o’clock and 52 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, July 24, 2018, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.