

## COURTS: Enviros slam controversial appeals court nominee

Environmental groups yesterday expressed "serious concern" about another Bush administration nominee to the federal courts, citing what they describe as his pro-corporate record and a philosophy that may prevent the federal government from implementing some environmental regulations.

At issue is the nomination of former Mississippi appeals court Judge Leslie Southwick to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals -- a nomination that has drawn strong criticism from organizations on the left and raised speculation that Senate Democrats may reject the nominee.

Southwick's nomination was slated to come before the Senate Judiciary Committee yesterday, but ranking member Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) asked the panel to delay the vote -- the third time the committee vote has been delayed.

Environmental groups -- among them Earthjustice, Friends of the Earth and the Sierra Club -- yesterday joined the chorus of criticism, although the groups stopped short of flatly opposing the nomination.

"His record as a judge, combined with Judge Southwick's own words, raise questions about his ability to be a fair and neutral arbiter of the environment and other cases that involve the interests of corporate defendants," wrote the groups.

The organizations specifically cite Southwick's writings on his interpretation of the federal government's authority under the constitution and lawsuits involving corporations as the basis for their concern.