

Vote delayed again on controversial Mississippi judge

By Sue Sturgis

We [reported](#) recently about the controversy over President Bush's nomination of Mississippi judge Leslie Southwick to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Yesterday the Senate vote on that nomination was delayed for a third time because of mounting concern over Southwick's record and judicial philosophy. Sen. Arlen Specter, the ranking Republican on the Senate Judiciary Committee, sought a week's delay in the vote, the Mississippi Clarion-Ledger [reports](#).

A retired judge with the Mississippi Court of Appeals, Southwick has come under fire by civil rights and human rights groups for his record, including one opinion upholding the reinstatement without any disciplinary action of a white state employee who had been fired for calling a black co-worker a "good ole n*****." That ruling was unanimously reversed by the Mississippi Supreme Court.

Now environmental groups have also jumped into the fray, writing a letter to Judiciary Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Specter expressing "serious concerns" about the nomination.

Those concerns include Southwick's hostility to federal laws protecting the environment as well as women, senior citizens, minorities and

the disabled. They also criticize him for being a "pro-corporate partisan in Mississippi's tort wars," writing:

According to an analysis by the Alliance for Justice, "Judge Southwick voted, in whole or in part, against the injured party and in favor of special interests, such as corporations or insurance companies, in 160 out of 180 published decisions involving state employment law and torts cases in which at least one judge dissented."

That analysis is available online [here](#) (*PDF*).

The June 13 letter was signed by representatives of [Community Rights Counsel](#), [Earthjustice](#), [Friends of the Earth](#), [Sierra Club](#), [Endangered Habitats League](#), [Louisiana Bayoukeeper](#), [Louisiana Environmental Action Network](#), [San Francisco Baykeeper](#), [Texas Campaign for the Environment](#) and [Valley Watch](#).