

Myers withdraws nomination, pleasing environmentalists

By Christa Marshall

Judicial nominee William G. Myers III has withdrawn his nomination for the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in the wake of Democratic opposition about his environmental record and questions about his ties to imprisoned lobbyist Jack Abramoff.

The former solicitor of the Interior Department joined two other appeals court nominees, William Haynes and Terrence Boyle, in withdrawing their names after newly-empowered Senate Democrats failed to offer their support.

Environmental groups hailed Myers' withdrawal, citing his actions as a former lobbyist for the mining and cattle industries and as the Interior's department top lawyer from July 2001 to October 2003.

"He unjustifiably favored mining companies and other special interests at the expense of laws that protect taxpayers, tribal rights and the environment," said Glenn Sugameli, Senior Legislative Counsel at Earthjustice. "(If he had been confirmed), Myers would have had power to turn his pro-industry bias into legal precedents governing nine Western states."

President Bush did not comment on the nominees, but White House spokesperson Dana Perino said in an interview with the Associated Press that the president blamed Democratic obstructionism for the withdrawals.

"Each of these nominees was well-qualified to serve as judges and would have been confirmed if they had been given a fair, up-or-down vote in the Senate," Perino said. "Unfortunately, a few selected senators prevented these nominees from receiving fair consideration."

Myers came under fire in December after the Denver Post reported he attended a 2001 party with Abramoff, even though Myers told the Senate Judiciary committee he never had contact with the lobbyist.

The White House argued that Myers attended the party without meeting Abramoff, but the revelation prompted incoming Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Sen. Patrick Leahy to write a letter demanding Myers to explain his comments.

Myers is a graduate of the University of Denver College of Law, and recently worked for the Denver-based law firm of Holland & Hart on public land issues before entering private practice in Idaho.