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Editorial

Right-wing zealot is unfit to judge

Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor favors posting the Ten Commandments in the courtroom, opposes abortion, even for rape victims, and filed the only state brief in opposition to the federal Violence Against Women Act.

President Bush wants him on the appellate court that oversees the rights of Georgians.

If Bush had combed the country for the perfect Christian Right extremist, he couldn't have found a more perfect candidate. Pryor has been nominated for the Atlanta-based 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which hears federal appeals from Georgia, Alabama and Florida.

A popular speaker at Christian Coalition events, Pryor is best remembered for standing on the steps of the Alabama Capitol at a rally in support of state Supreme Court Justice Roy Moore's display of the Ten Commandments in his courtroom.

Pryor used the occasion to rail against the Roe v. Wade decision.

"I will never forget," he said, "the day seven members of our highest court ripped the Constitution and ripped out the life of millions of unborn children."

Among other extreme positions Pryor has argued was the legitimacy of

Alabama prison guards' handcuffing state prisoners to hitching posts in the summer heat. But the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the practice is cruel and unusual, dismissing Pryor's argument that the prison guards should be given legal immunity. Senate Republicans have tried to depict opposition to Pryor and a handful of other Bush nominations as a broad refusal to let the president fill judicial vacancies. In truth, though, the Senate has already confirmed 120 Bush nominees.

With the exception of Miguel Estrada, those few nominees being blocked by Senate Democrats do not deserve to be confirmed. Pryor's nomination, for example, is an affront to the basic premise that a candidate for the federal bench must exhibit respect for established constitutional principles and individual liberties.

Pryor may be a good lawyer and a faithful Republican, but his lifelong extremism disqualifies him for a federal judgeship.