



On judicial nominees, Trump just keeps on #winning

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President Trump hit another judicial home run with his 5th Circuit nominees today. Don Willett and Jim Ho are tremendously experienced and qualified lawyers and public servants whose intellect and legal skills are matched only by their integrity and commitment to the rule of law. I have known them both for a long time and can attest that they will be tremendous assets to the federal judiciary.

Justice Willett's nomination in particular will make national headlines because of his presence of social media. A decade from now it probably (hopefully!) won't be unusual to find federal judges tweeting about life, the universe, and everything -- but in 2017, Willett is a trailblazer.

Not that he's snarky or glib or anything that Twitter is known for. Instead, he's become the judicial Twitter laureate because of the education he gives his fellow citizens on the Constitution and the proper role of a judge (and bacon) all in his own inimitable "judge next door" style. It's to the enduring credit of the White House counsel's office and Justice Department that someone who's not plain-vanilla made it through the vetting process.

Not that Willett is all hat, no cattle. His work on the Texas Supreme Court has become known for his clear writing style and unwillingness to let the government, especially the Texas government, slide if it's exceeding its powers or intruding on constitutional rights. It's no wonder that he made the Supreme Court shortlist for the seat that Justice Neil Gorsuch now occupies, nor that he's become a favorite of conservative (and libertarian) elites and Texas lawyers alike.

Jim Ho has also made a reputation as someone committed to originalism and textualism, having graduated with honors from the University of Chicago Law School (my alma mater), clerked for Justice Clarence Thomas, built on Ted Cruz's success as Texas solicitor general, and established his own nationally renowned appellate practice at Gibson Dunn in Dallas. He's truly a rising star.

An additional winner from this announcement is Cruz himself. Both Willett and Ho are longtime friends of his and the fact that the junior senator from the Lone Star state was able to prevail in the Texas battle royale that delayed the filling of these two seats speaks volumes about the continued influence he has regarding constitutional issues and the future of the conservative legal movement.

In short, I offer a double-barrel salute to President Trump and his legal advisers on this one. Whatever else is going on in the world, this administration's judicial appointments are on the right track.

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