

BUSH'S IDEA OF WORTHWHILE CANDIDATES TO BE IMMIGRATION JUDGES

The "Monica Goodling Report" makes it clear that the Bush Administration changed the hiring process for immigration judges not only to ensure judges would be tough on immigration, but to create a slew of patronage jobs they could offer to loyal Republicans. At one point, Monica's predecessor at DOJ as White House Liaison, Jan Williams, pledged immigration judge slots as if part of some kind of lottery—"let the games begin!"

On May 17, 2005, Williams received an e-mail from the White House Office of Political Affairs addressed to White House Liaisons in agencies throughout the executive branch. The e-mail urged the White House Liaisons to "get creative" and find positions for more than 100 "priority candidates" who "have loyally served the President." The White House also sought from each White House Liaison a "pledge of the number of the 108 priority candidates you can place at your agency." In a follow-up e-mail, the White House reiterated that "we simply want to place as many of our Bush loyalists as possible." The context of the emails made plain that the positions sought were political, non-career slots. On May 19, 2005, Williams responded: "We pledge 7 slots within 40 days and 40 nights. Let the games begin!"

As you can imagine, lotteries of hack Republicans don't necessarily result in qualified candidates. But some of the ones described in the report rival Michael Brown in their lack of qualifications for the position.

On candidate described in the report has been described in earlier reporting—a New Hampshire GOP operative and former Judd Gregg campaign treasurer, Francis Cramer, who failed to get a job as a tax judge.

The first example of a direct appointment in which Sampson referred an IJ candidate to EOIR involved an attorney who served as the campaign treasurer for a Republican Senator from New Hampshire. The campaign treasurer had been nominated to the U.S. Tax Court by President Bush in 2001, and Sampson was the person at the White House who was assigned to “shepherd” the candidate through the nomination process. The nomination was not successful, and the candidate was appointed to a political position in the DOJ Tax Division.

In October 2003 the candidate approached an official in the OAG to inquire about IJ positions, and learned that Sampson was in charge of IJ hiring.

Shortly thereafter, the candidate spoke with Sampson by telephone. In January 2004, the candidate learned that he would be interviewed by EOIR for an IJ position. An EOIR official told us that he learned that the candidate had already been offered a position before he came to EOIR for his interview. The subsequent recommendation from EOIR to appoint the candidate as an IJ was sent to Baxter in the ODAG on February 19, 2004. In an internal Department e-mail dated March 18, 2004 to the Justice Management Division, Department White House Liaison Susan Richmond noted that the candidate would soon be appointed and commented: “could you . . . advise [the] Sen. . . . of this? This is the issue he’d been pushing with us.” The candidate was appointed as an IJ on April 4, 2004.

For example, the White House reached out to a Republican Congressman, and on June 7, 2005, the Congressman's staff sent an email to the White House recommending a candidate, described as a "great Republican," for an IJ position in New York. On June 15, 2005, the White House forwarded that e-mail to Williams, adding that the candidate was a "long time donor to the local GOP," and that local Republican Party officials would vouch for him. Williams forwarded the candidate's name to EOIR.

Then there's the one candidate the Executive Office for Immigration Review managed to refuse—who sounds like he's a Republican frat boy who never had to interview seriously for a job before.

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EOIR resisted this candidate proposed by the OAG. This was the only time we found that EOIR resisted any OAG candidate. In an e-mail dated December 7, 2005, Ohlson advised Williams that the candidate's conduct during his EOIR interview "causes us to question whether he possesses the appropriate judicial temperament and demeanor to serve as an immigration judge." Ohlson related that the candidate used profanity during the interview, acted abrasively, and when asked what his greatest weakness was,

responded “Blondes.”

And, finally, there’s one more candidate Williams tried to get hired during her lottey of Republican hacks—who was under investigation for misconduct.

Three weeks later, on July 7, 2005, Williams transmitted to EOIR the names of eight candidates for specific IJ positions. Ohlson responded the same day in an e-mail, noting that one of the named candidates was under investigation by the Department for professional misconduct,

Mind you, only one of these three is now serving as an immigration judge (though click through to last year’s WaPo piece to see the other kinds of hacks who are still serving as immigration judges). Yet had Bush had his way, all three of these geniuses would currently be in a permanent position