October 29, 2019

Via Email
The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Via Email
The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Nomination of Lawrence J.C. VanDyke to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Feinstein:

The American Bar Association’s Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary has received a full report on Lawrence J.C. VanDyke and a supplemental review by a former chair of the Committee. The Committee’s work is based solely on a review of integrity, professional competence, and judicial temperament. Based on these criteria, a substantial majority of the Committee has determined that Mr. VanDyke is “Not Qualified,” and a minority determined that he is “Qualified” to serve on the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. The majority rating represents the Standing Committee’s official rating. I write to offer a brief explanation of this rating.

Mr. VanDyke’s accomplishments are offset by the assessments of interviewees that Mr. VanDyke is arrogant, lazy, an ideologue, and lacking in knowledge of the day-to-day practice including procedural rules. There was a theme that the nominee lacks...
humility, has an “entitlement” temperament, does not have an open mind, and does not always have a commitment to being candid and truthful.

Some interviewees raised concerns about whether Mr. VanDyke would be fair to persons who are gay, lesbian, or otherwise part of the LGBTQ community. Mr. VanDyke would not say affirmatively that he would be fair to any litigant before him, notably members of the LGBTQ community.

Even though Mr. VanDyke is clearly smart, comments were made that in some oral arguments he missed issues fundamental to the analysis of the case. There were reports that his preparation and performance were lacking in some cases in which he did not have a particular personal or political interest.

While the evaluator was careful in her interview with Mr. VanDyke not to name interviewees, the nature of the issues that gave rise to some of the negative comments had been publicly discussed and other adverse comments could be raised without identifying interviewees. The negative issues discussed in this letter were thoroughly discussed with interviewees and vetted with the nominee. Significantly, the interviewees’ views, negative or positive, appeared strongly held on this nominee.

The Committee’s work is guided by the Backgrounder which reflects that judgment is a component of professional competence, and that open-mindedness, courtesy, patience, freedom from bias, and commitment to equal justice under law are components of judicial temperament. Based on these principles, a substantial majority of the Committee determined that the nominee is “Not Qualified” to be a Ninth Circuit judge.

Very truly yours,

William C. Hubbard

WCH:cks

cc: Pat A. Cipollone, White House Counsel (via email)
    Lola A. Kingo, Chief Nominations Counsel, Office of Legal Policy,
    U.S. Department of Justice (via email)
    Lawrence J.C. VanDyke (via email)
    ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary (via email)
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