

Specter holds judicial hearing

The senator said there were too many federal court vacancies. He described the nominees as "very able."

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WASHINGTON — Acting to fill some of the many vacant federal judgeships, Sen. Arlen Specter (R., Pa.) yesterday held a judicial nomination hearing for Marjorie O. Rendell of Philadelphia, two other Pennsylvanians, and a Floridian who have been tapped for slots on the courts.

Specter chaired the brief Judiciary Committee hearing for Rendell, the wife of Mayor Rendell; former state Supreme Court Justice Bruce W. Kauffman of Philadelphia; A.

Richard Caputo, a lawyer from Luzerne County; and Richard A. Lazzara, a state judge from Tampa.

Marjorie Rendell, who has been a U.S. District Court judge since 1994, has been nominated for the Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Caputo and Kauffman have been nominated for seats on the U.S. District Court in Pennsylvania, and Lazzara for the federal district court in Florida.

Not included among yesterday's nominees was Philadelphia Common Pleas Court Judge Frederica A. Massiah-Jackson, who, if confirmed, would be the first African American

woman to serve in the federal court's Eastern District of Pennsylvania. Officials explained that some of the paperwork with her nomination had been delayed and that she was expected to be called at the next nomination hearing later this month.

Massiah-Jackson appeared with Specter, Kauffman and Rendell last month at a news conference called by the senator to discuss the urgency of filling vacancies. There are roughly 100 vacancies, the result both of the failure of President Clinton to nominate candidates and the failure of the Senate to process those he has put forward.

On the Third Circuit court, which covers Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, there are two vacancies. On the district court level,

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on Rendell, 3 others

there is one vacancy in Delaware, one in New Jersey, and three in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

"We have serious backlogs in the courts and we need to have these judges on the bench working," Specter said after the hearing yesterday. "We got these nominations before the August recess, and I made up my mind to get them done as fast as possible."

The nominees are all "very able," the senator said.

"Midge Rendell has an excellent record on the district court," said Specter, a former Philadelphia district attorney. "I've known her for a long time, since she dated Ed Rendell when he was an assistant district attorney and she was a coed at the University of Pennsylvania."



Marjorie O. Rendell

Specter described Kauffman, an Atlantic City native who served on the state Supreme Court from 1980 to 1982, as a "tremendous guy," and Caputo, a former Air Force lawyer now in private practice in Kingston, Pa., as "excellent."

The committee will probably vote on the nominees in a week or two, a committee spokeswoman said, followed by a vote by the full Senate.