

Harriet, We Hardly Knew You

The retreat of Harriet Miers from Supreme Court consideration once again highlights the vicious ideological war being fought around the country.

Ms. Miers seems to be a nice woman about whom nobody knows very much. But from the get go, some conservative activists opposed her nomination because they deemed her unqualified. Unqualified? The woman daily advises the most powerful man in the world on legal issues that shape U.S. policy. I mean, that may be an indicator Ms. Miers has at least some knowledge of the law, right?

My position was, give Harriet Miers a chance to answer the questions in front of the Senate and the world. But noooooo—right wing ideologues simply did not believe she would advance the conservative cause aggressively enough, so she was unacceptable. And without conservative support in the Senate, there was no way she would have been confirmed.

Enter Senator Edward Kennedy, who voted against perhaps the most qualified Supreme Court nominee in decades, John Roberts. In a statement shortly after Miers withdrew, Kennedy said: “The only voices heard in this process were the voices of the extreme factions of the President’s own political party. They had a litmus test, and before giving her a fair chance to have her own voice heard, they decided Harriet Miers didn’t meet it.”

Yes, you read that right. Ted Kennedy is complaining about a Republican litmus test for a Supreme Court nominee. The senior Senator from Massachusetts, a man who demands total acceptance of all facets of abortion before he’ll even consider a judicial nomination, is lamenting that Harriet Miers was denied a fair hearing. Rod Serling would have loved this.

Is there anyone in this country who believes Kennedy would

have supported Harriet Miers, knowing she is an Evangelical Christian who attends a church that is pro-life? Anyone?

The whole Miers episode is another shoddy example of how the political process is now so ideological, it is damaging to all Americans. The Bush administration is beset with problems and needs a counterattack issue. Harriet Miers was simply another negative, so Bush bailed. Now, he'll nominate a more ideological person in order to energize his conservative base. If he can jazz up his core supporters, it will make it easier for him to get through his other trials.

But what about us, the folks? Many of us don't want politics being played when a vital Supreme Court vacancy needs to be filled. I don't want litmus tests from any Senator. I want a judge who understands the intent of the Constitution and will check his or her ideology in the cloakroom. Can't we just have smart, fair judges in this country?

Harriet Miers got a raw deal. Power politics did her in. Nobody should be happy about any of this. She got supremely hosed.