

**Statement of
John F. Ring
Nominee for Member of the National Labor Relations Board
Before the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, United States Senate
March 1, 2018**

Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray and Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you today as a nominee for the National Labor Relations Board.

I would like to start by thanking my family, many of whom are here with me today, for their support and many sacrifices. I also would like to acknowledge my parents, who are no longer with us but to whom I owe so much. They instilled in me the value of hard work, fair play, and respect for others.

I want to thank President Trump for his confidence in me. There really is no greater honor for a labor lawyer than to serve on the NLRB. For me, this honor is somewhat more personal. If it were not for the opportunities afforded to me by so many in the labor-management relations field – both labor and management – I would not be here today. I truly view my chance to serve on the NLRB as an extraordinary opportunity to give back.

I came to Washington in 1981 with virtually nothing but a strong work ethic and the belief that anything was possible. Upon graduating from public high school in my home town of Clinton, Connecticut, college was only an option if I could figure out a way to pay for it. Fortunately, Catholic University offered me scholarships and financial aid. That tremendous help, plus student loans and what I had saved in high school working at a grocery store and in fast food, made college possible.

Nevertheless, I still needed to work to earn money for books and living expenses, and I found a part-time, \$5-an-hour file clerk job at the Teamsters Union headquarters just across the plaza from here. At the time, I wasn't exactly sure what the Teamsters did, but it was a paying job. I worked at the Teamsters 20 to 30 hours a week starting my first week of classes. Gradually, I moved up from file clerk to positions of more responsibility, and when I graduated from college in 1985, the Teamsters offered me a full-time job. That job allowed me to put myself through law school in the evenings.

My almost seven years at the Teamsters gave me a unique perspective, and I have never forgotten what I learned. I saw labor-management relations, collective bargaining, and union representation from that side. I also came to know a number of good, committed union officials. It was my completely accidental experience at the Teamsters that sparked my interest in labor law.

I ultimately decided to pursue labor law on the management side. As this Committee knows, lawyers in labor law either represent management or unions, but almost never both. In moving to the management side, I selected the law firm carefully, considering reputation and approach to

labor-management relations. I started at Morgan Lewis as a summer associate in May 1988, and I never left. I now am fortunate to co-lead the firm's Labor/Management Relations Practice Group and serve as the Practice Leader for the Washington Office Labor and Employment Group.

My almost 30 years of practice has involved representing corporate clients on all issues arising under the National Labor Relations Act. A focus has been collective bargaining and labor-management relations in heavily unionized industries. I have been involved at the bargaining table in some of the largest, industry-wide negotiations as well as worked with small and medium-sized companies negotiating local labor contracts and resolving labor disputes. I have come to know many employers working hard to provide good jobs for their employees and fully committed to meeting all of their legal obligations. Thus, much of my work has involved counseling clients on NLRA compliance and avoiding NLRB litigation, although I have handled cases at all levels of the Board.

More recently, my law practice has involved working with Taft-Hartley benefit plans. These plans, which are created and funded through collective bargaining and overseen by an equal number of labor and management trustees, provide benefits for many unionized work places. Serving as employer co-counsel on a number of these multiemployer pension and health and welfare plans, I advise the trustees on the wide range of issues required to administer benefits for tens of thousands of participants.

If confirmed, I will bring this background and experience to my role at the NLRB. From my past work, I know firsthand the importance of the NLRA being interpreted and enforced as it is written and consistent with its amendments. I understand the practical realities of how the Board's actions affect labor-management relations across the country, and I have seen the impact the Board's decisions can have on how people run their businesses as well as how employees – union and non-union – work to support their families.

Additionally, in the world of labor negotiations and labor-management relations, whether in collective bargaining or at a trustees table, there can be sharp disagreements and strongly held views. It sometimes can be difficult to find common ground. I've learned during my years of practice that you must develop constructive relationships, treat people and their views with respect, and approach differences with an open mind. It does not necessarily mean abandoning your position or principles, but it does require working constructively to forge agreements in a positive manner. My experiences will help in dealing with the difficult issues that often come before the NLRB.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not say that my years of practice have given me tremendous respect for the NLRB and for the many career professionals who do the hard work of the Agency. If I am fortunate enough to be confirmed, it will be an honor to work with them.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these opening remarks. I welcome your questions.