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# Republican National Lawyers Association

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## **RNLA Thanks Matthew Petersen for His Service on the Federal Election Commission**

Washington, D.C. — The Republican National Lawyers Association (RNLA) thanks Federal Election Commission (FEC) Commissioner Matthew Petersen for his years of public service on the FEC. Commissioner Petersen announced today that he would leave the FEC effective August 31.

Commissioner Matthew Petersen currently serves as Vice Chairman of the FEC. He was nominated to the FEC by President George W. Bush and unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate less than two weeks later, on June 24, 2008. Prior to his service on the FEC, he served as Republican chief counsel to the U.S. Senate Committee on Rules and Administration and counsel to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on House Administration, where he was extensively involved in the crafting of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 ("HAVA"). He specialized in election and campaign finance law at the law firm of Wiley Rein LLP before his years of public service.

RNLA President David Warrington praised Commissioner Petersen's character and commitment to the rule of law: "First and foremost, Matt is a gentleman. As a commissioner, he strove to apply the law consistent with First Amendment jurisprudence to protect the fundamental right of all Americans to participate in the political process. His thoughtful and calm approach will be missed, especially in the light of the agency's recent politicization. We thank Matt for his service and wish him well in his new endeavors."

Immediate past RNLA President Elliot Berke agreed: "Matt Petersen embodies what is best in public service. He is fair-minded, he is decent, he is civil. He is a man of true character and integrity. I'm proud to call him friend and congratulate on a job well done."

Lee Goodman, a member of the RNLA Board of Governors and Commissioner Petersen's former colleague on the FEC, further stated: "Matt's thoughtful and analytical approach to the law influenced virtually every major decision of the Commission over the past decade. In addition to his analytical approach to the law, Matt was always a gentleman commissioner, a consummate professional, and a calming personality on a body often at philosophical odds."

The FEC is required by statute to have the votes of four commissioners, a minimum of bipartisan agreement, to take many actions. With the departure of Commissioner Petersen, the FEC will only have three members. As the other current Republican commissioner on the FEC, Caroline Hunter, explained, "Without a quorum, certain Commission activities will not take place. For example, the Commission will not be able to hold meetings, initiate audits, vote on enforcement matters, issue advisory opinions, or engage in rulemakings."

Traditionally, Republican and Democratic nominees to the FEC have always been paired during the confirmation process. RNLA Executive Director Michael Thielen noted the political background of the

FEC's lack of a quorum: "While the Trump White House and Senate Republican leadership have been attempting to fill vacancies and replace commissioners on the FEC for several years, Democrats have resisted, hoping that an understaffed FEC will feed their narrative of FEC 'dysfunction' and provide the basis for restricting Americans' First Amendment rights of political speech through greater campaign finance regulation. President Trump nominated Trey Trainor to serve on the FEC back in September 2017, but to date, Chuck Schumer has not named a Democrat to be paired with him. This is yet another example of the Democrats' strategy of obstruction and delay with respect to President Trump's nominees."

FEC Commissioners have an especially important duty to enforce campaign finance laws without impinging on Americans' First Amendment rights of political speech. As Commissioner Petersen said in his letter of resignation to President Trump: "Upon being sworn in, I took an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. This oath is especially meaningful for an FEC Commissioner, whose mandate involves safeguarding the First Amendment rights of the American people when taking regulatory action. Throughout my service, I have faithfully discharged my duty to enforce the law in a manner that respects free speech rights, while also fairly interpreting the relevant statutes and regulations and providing meaningful notice to those subject to FEC jurisdiction."

The RNLA thanks Commissioner Petersen for taking his oath seriously and for serving the American people on the FEC for so many years.

The RNLA is the national organization of Republican attorneys. The mission of RNLA is to advance professionalism; open, fair, and honest elections; career opportunity; and Republican ideals. For more information, please visit [www.rnla.org](http://www.rnla.org).

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