

Chairman Peters Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery
Full Committee Hearing: Civil Rights Cold Case Records Review Board Nominations
January 13, 2022

Today, we are considering the nominations of Margaret Burnham, Gabrielle Dudley, Henry Klibanoff, and Brenda Stevenson, to be Members of the Civil Rights Cold Case Records Review Board.

Welcome, each of you, to this hearing today and certainly congratulate you on what is truly an historic nomination. I am grateful for your willingness to serve. You are the first nominees chosen to serve in these very vital roles. And if confirmed, you will have a solemn, solemn responsibility to begin this board's very important work.

The board, which was created in 2019 by a bipartisan law inspired by the work of high school students in New Jersey, reviews records from civil rights cases for public release, including race related murders and lynchings, that have tragically gone unresolved for decades.

This has delayed closure for communities and families who have wrestled with the pain of tragically unsolved civil rights crimes. They have had to wait far too long for justice to be served, and for the perpetrators of these crimes to be held accountable for their horrific actions.

I am pleased that, this summer, President Biden nominated these four distinguished, and highly qualified, nominees to serve on the board.

Your expertise in history, law, and journalism, will help uncover the truth, and get much-needed answers that will help many families and communities heal from these tragic, unsolved murders.

Once confirmed, today's nominees will begin the difficult, but important, work of telling the victims' stories and shedding light on this dark chapter of our nation's history. Although justice has been delayed for too long in many of these cases, the board's mission to investigate and release relevant records will help Americans living today, and for generations to come, uncover the truth of these terrible crimes and the racism that drove their perpetrators.

Thank you, again, to our nominees, for your willingness to take on these critical new roles. I look forward to hearing more about your qualifications and your visions for the role of this important and historic board.