

July 8, 2005

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write as members of a broad-based coalition representing millions of Americans committed to our country's founding democratic principles: namely, our system of checks and balances and the role of an independent judiciary in safeguarding the rights, freedoms, and legal protections of all Americans.

As you face the awesome responsibility of nominating someone to serve a lifetime position on our nation's highest court, we urge you to choose a nominee who can unite the country, earn the confidence of the American people, and win broad bipartisan support in the United States Senate. We may not have agreed with all of Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's decisions on key issues, but she demonstrated that she approached each case with an open mind, independently, and without bias.

We understand that you will meet with Senate leaders next week for a discussion about Justice O'Connor's replacement. We applaud you for taking that step. We hope that it is a part of an ongoing process of consultation with senators from both parties to ensure that the nominee can achieve broad bipartisan support in the Senate and will have the confidence of the American people.

When your predecessors put forward consensus nominees, the confirmation process was smooth and swift. When President Ronald Reagan nominated Justice O'Connor, for example, he offered to the Senate and the country a consensus candidate acceptable to all Democrats. President Bill Clinton sought and took the advice of Senator Orrin Hatch – then in the minority party – by nominating Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer.

If you send the Senate a nominee who, like Justice O'Connor, is committed to preserving the rights, liberties, and legal protections Americans rely on, you will help heal division and spare the nation a polarizing confirmation battle.

To ensure an independent judiciary, the framers of the Constitution divided the process for selecting federal judges between the president and the Senate. Senators have a constitutionally-defined responsibility to make an independent assessment of any nominee to the Supreme Court. Just as you must take the time you need to make this momentous decision, senators must have the time and opportunity to make a judgment based on a fully informed understanding of a nominee's views on the law.



INDEPENDENT COURT.ORG

As you know, our nation faces great challenges. Please, Mr. President, choose the course of unity by selecting a Supreme Court justice for all the people, one upon whom Americans of all political persuasions can rely to uphold their rights, freedoms, and legal protections.

Sincerely,

ADA Watch/National Coalition for Disability Rights
Alliance for Justice
The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
American Association for Affirmative Action
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association of University Women
American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), AFL-CIO
American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Humanist Association and Equal Partners in Faith
Americans for Democratic Action
Americans for Religious Liberty
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Bill of Rights Defense Committee
Center for American Progress
Center for Community Change
Center for Prophetic Renewal, Los Angeles
Center for Reproductive Rights
Central Conference of American Rabbis
Christians for Justice Action (United Church of Christ)
Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights
Committee for Judicial Independence
Community Rights Counsel
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Disciples Justice Action Network (Disciples of Christ)
Earthjustice
Equal Partners in Faith
Faith Voices for the Common Good
Friends Committee on National Legislation (Quaker)
Friends of the Earth
Human Rights Campaign
The Interfaith Alliance (TIA)
Lambda Legal
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
Legal Momentum
Methodist Federation for Social Action

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)
MoveOn PAC
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Abortion Federation
National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees
National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC)
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
National Association of Muslim Lawyers (NAML)
National Association of the Deaf
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza
National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)
National Employment Lawyers Association
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Puerto Rican Coalition
National Senior Citizens Law Center
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
National Women's Political Caucus
NETWORK: A Catholic Social Justice Lobby
New Mexico Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Open Society Policy Center
Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)
People for the American Way
Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Rabbinical Assembly
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
The Shalom Center
Sierra Club
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Food and Commercial Workers International Union
USAction
The Witherspoon Society (Presbyterian Church, USA)
Women Employed
Women of Reform Judaism
YWCA USA