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before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary

Hearing on the Nomination of Samuel A. Alito, Jr.
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Mr. Chairman, Senator Leahy and Members of the Committee. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Katherine Pringle. I am a partner of the law firm Friedman Kaplan Seiler & Adelman LLP. I was a law clerk for Judge Alito from 1993 to 1994, and he has remained a mentor since that time. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to share my experiences with and personal observations of Judge Alito, and my support for his nomination as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court.

I began a clerkship for Judge Alito upon my graduation from Georgetown Law School. I was then – as I am now – a committed and active Democrat. I had heard from some of my professors that Judge Alito had a reputation as a conservative, and I therefore expected his to be an ideologically charged chambers, in which I would battle to defend my liberal ideals against his conservative ones.

But what I found was very different than what I had expected. I learned in my year with Judge Alito that his approach to judging is not about personal ideology or ambition, but about hard work and devotion to law and justice.

I would like to share several things that I learned about Judge Alito during the time in which I worked for him.

First, I learned that Judge Alito reaches his decisions by working through cases from the bottom up, not the top down. He taught me to try to ignore any personal predispositions and come at the case with an open mind. He taught me to work carefully



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through an analysis of the facts of the case and the legal precedents, and to try to find the resolution that flowed from that analysis.

The Judge consistently applied this bottom-up approach. He approached every case without a personal agenda, and with a commitment to careful and methodical review. His approach was demanding. He read and re-read the record of each case, the decisions cited, and relevant decisions that the parties had failed to cite. I remember him building a model from string and paper to try to figure out the events of one case, and I remember him physically acting out the circumstances of another, all in an attempt to truly understand the facts. He worked hard on every case, large or small. He sought to find the result that flowed from the facts and the law, divorced from any personal bias or interest.

Second, I learned that Judge Alito is interested in, and respectful of, differing points of view. The law clerks with whom I worked spanned the ideological spectrum. I later learned that this is typical, and that Judge Alito selects law clerks with widely varying backgrounds, political outlooks, and personal views. This led to lively debates amongst the law clerks. In my experience, Judge Alito was never dismissive of any point of view. He encouraged our input, challenged each of us to substantiate our views, and listened carefully to the points that we made.

Judge Alito treated advocates before him with the same respect. He asked probing questions, which he refused to let the advocates sidestep. But he was never caustic or rude, and he always appreciated the honest efforts of an advocate.

Judge Alito was similarly respectful of the differing opinions of his fellow Judges on the Third Circuit. He sought to forge consensus where consensus could be reached.

When he dissented from their views, he did so in a respectful and intellectually honest way. The appreciation that Judge Alito's colleagues have for him is reflected in the outpouring of support at these hearings from both active and retired Judges of the Third Circuit.

Finally, I learned that Judge Alito approaches his job with personal humility and a great respect for the institution of the courts. What I saw was a person cognizant of the limited role assigned to him by the Constitution to interpret and enforce the law as established by written law and prior precedent. Judge Alito did not, in my experience, ever treat a case as a platform for a personal agenda or ambition. Rather, his decisions are limited to the issue at hand. They demonstrate an effort to interpret honestly, and faithfully apply, the law to the parties that seek justice before him.

Apart from his judicial approach, Judge Alito was a thoughtful and generous boss. He took the time to get to know his clerks, and to learn about us and our families. He never made demands on us that he did not make on himself. He had none of the personal arrogance that sometimes attends power. In fact, I remember Judge Alito insisting on carrying *my* bags into court when I was recovering from a slight hand injury – a reversal of ordinary roles that left me ill prepared for my next job as a junior law-firm associate! He shared with us his love of Phillies baseball and his pride in his family. Judge Alito has also remained a mentor in the years since I moved on from my clerkship, and he has been generous with his time when I have sought his advice.

It was my great privilege to work with and learn from Judge Alito at the outset of my professional career. I believe that he will be an outstanding Justice of the United States Supreme Court.