September 12, 2005

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Chairman
United States Senate Judiciary Committee
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
United States Judiciary Committee
433 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Specter and Leahy:

As the confirmation hearings of Judge John G. Roberts as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court begins, the Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing calls on you to carefully examine his commitment to upholding the constitutional rights of privacy as well as our core American principles of religious liberty and the separation of church and state.

As people of faith and as religious leaders across the political and denominational spectrum, we turn to you to examine how Judge Robert's religious and philosophical beliefs will affect his understanding and interpretation of the Constitution, including his beliefs about sexual justice issues. Supreme Court decisions over the past 40 years have affirmed the right to privacy in sexual matters, and they must be upheld. Our traditions celebrate that sexuality is God's life-giving and life-fulfilling gift, and we pray for the time when all people will be able to celebrate their sexuality with holiness and integrity, free from ignorance, discrimination, and violence.

The Religious Institute includes more than 2400 religious leaders from more than 40 religious traditions in the United States. They have endorsed the Religious Declaration on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing, which in part calls for a faith based commitment to abortion rights and full inclusion of sexual minorities in society and

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congregational life. We affirm that life and love are sacred, that women must have the legal right to exercise their moral agency about pregnancy-related decisions without governmental interference, and that there is no justification for discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, including marriage equality.

We have attached copies of theological frameworks supporting marriage equality and abortion rights for your information.

We join with people of faith from diverse faith traditions throughout America to ask for and pray for the most thorough confirmation hearings so that Senators are able to vote with full information about Judge John Roberts. We will hold you in our prayers and thoughts in this most important work in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

The Reverend Debra W. Haffner

cc: Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Senator Sam Brownback
Senator Tom Coburn
Senator John Cornyn
Senator Mike DeWine
Senator Richard J. Durbin
Senator Russ Feingold
Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Lindsey O. Graham
Senator Charles E. Grassley
Senator Orrin G. Hatch
Senator Edward M. Kennedy
Senator Herbert H. Kohl
Senator John L. Kyl
Senator Charles E. Schumer
Senator Jeff Sessions

Enclosures: Open Letter to Religious Leaders on Abortion as a Moral Decision
Open Letter to Religious Leaders on Marriage Equality