

In 2005, the HNBA also named the judge on a bipartisan shortlist of eight potential Supreme Court nominees, prepared by a Supreme Court committee, after substantial due diligence. The HNBA's Supreme Court committee, again, performed due diligence on her record after this nomination.

As a result, we are confident that Judge Sotomayor is extraordinarily well qualified to serve as a justice for the Supreme Court. Some have suggested that, if confirmed, the judge will render decisions based on her personal bias. They could not be more wrong.

Her extensive judicial record shows that her background and her experiences do not detract from her ability to adhere to the rule of law. On the contrary, they are a positive.

Her story resonates with all Americans. She is proof that in our country, in our country, there is no limit, even for those of us from the most humble of backgrounds. Her confirmation will mark another key step in our journey as one nation, indivisible.

We are grateful to President Obama for making a wise decision in nominating Judge Sotomayor. Our thanks to all Americans for their interest in one of our country's shining stars.

The HNBA thanks this Committee and urges the Senate to confirm Judge Sotomayor. Thank you for listening.

[The prepared testimony of Ms. Romero appear as a submission for the record.]

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Thank you very much, Ms. Romero. Also, welcome to all of the many past presidents that are there, that is quite a number, as well as vice presidents.

We have now been joined by the honorable Nydia Velázquez, who is the Congresswoman here. I know she is incredibly busy and has joined us, and Senator Sessions and I have both agreed that you would not have to stay for questions.

She is currently serving her ninth term as representative for New York's 12 Congressional District. She was the first Puerto Rican woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and currently serves as the Chairwoman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Chair of the House Small Business Committee, and a senior member of the Financial Services Committee.

Because you missed the swearing in, we will do that now. This is the Senate Judiciary Committee, so welcome. Could you raise your right hand? Do you affirm that the testimony that you are about to give before the Committee is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Representative VELÁZQUEZ. I do.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Thank you. You have 5 minutes, Congresswoman, and we are honored to have you here. Thank you.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE LYDIA VELÁZQUEZ, CHAIR,
CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS**

Representative VELÁZQUEZ. Thank you. Madam Chairman, Ranking Member, and the members of the Committee, I have known Sonia Sotomayor for over 20 years.

In fact, when I was first elected to Congress in 1993, I asked her to administer my oath of office. I can tell you personally that she is a grounded and professional individual. And over the last 3.5

days, all of us have been able to see her considerable legal ability impressively displayed.

Hispanics everywhere are proud that such a distinguished legal talent hails from our community. We have all been energized by her nomination. But, of course, that is not the reason why she should be confirmed. The case for Judge Sotomayor's confirmation is built on her vast experience, keen intellect, and tremendous qualifications.

It is not that Judge Sotomayor does not have a compelling life history. She does. As so many have already pointed out, hers is a uniquely American story, one that begins in the Bronx projects and ultimately reaches the highest echelons of our legal system.

This background instilled within her the belief that hard work is rewarded and the knowledge that with the right combination of talent and effort, anything is possible in America.

These core values propelled Sonia Sotomayor to remarkable heights. As her career progressed, she managed to reach nearly every level of the legal system. With each new step, she excelled not only as a prosecutor and a litigator, but also as an appellate judge.

Yet, throughout that process of achievement, she never once lost touch with her roots or her Bronx neighborhood. Instead, she augmented her vast legal experience with common sense understanding of working class America. That appreciation will add a valuable perspective to the Supreme Court.

Make no mistake. The stakes are high for Hispanic-Americans. The Supreme Court will rule on many matters that are critical to our community, from housing policy to voting rights. These are delicate issues.

With many of these matters, passion runs deep on both sides. Resolving them fairly will require objectivity, impartiality, and an unwavering commitment to the rule of law.

Judge Sotomayor's record demonstrates these qualities. She has a reputation as a non-ideological jurist, someone who chooses not to spar with those who think differently, but to instead find common ground. When working with Republican appointees, colleagues, Sotomayor's record will show that 95 percent of the time, she managed to forge consensus.

She was able to do this because she commands a sophisticated grasp of legal argument and has a keen awareness of the law's effect on every American.

When the Congressional Hispanic Caucus reviewed a broad range of qualified Supreme Court candidates, these were the traits we were looking for. We were looking for individuals who upheld constitutional values, exhibited a record of integrity, and had a profound, profound respect for our Constitution.

It is our overwhelming belief that Judge Sotomayor meets these criteria. That is why we enthusiastically and unanimously endorse her nomination.

Senators, the decision before the Committee today is one of your greatest responsibilities. I know this is something none of you on either side of the aisle take lightly. But I believe Judge Sotomayor's record of judicial integrity, impartiality and, as she puts it, fidelity to the law, is one we can all admire regardless of party or ideology.

If confirmed, Judge Sotomayor's service on the court will bring great pride to the Hispanic community. That goes without saying. But more importantly, it will add another objective disciplined legal talent to that august body.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to answering any questions. You can send it to my office, but we are going right now, and I really, really appreciate the opportunity that you have given me on behalf of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

[The prepared testimony of Representative Velázquez appear as a submission for the record.]

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you so much, Congresswoman Velázquez. That was an eloquent and personal statement. It means a lot to us, and you have contributed much to the hearing.

Representative VELÁZQUEZ. Thank you. I know her well. I know her heart, her soul, her intellect, but, most importantly, her temperament and integrity. Thank you.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Thank you so much, Congresswoman Velázquez. We know you have to vote and there are many things going on over in the House. So we appreciate and understand that. Thank you very much.

Next, we have Theodore M. Shaw. Mr. Shaw is a professor at Columbia Law School and former director-counsel and president of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. He began his legal career in the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice. He is a graduate of Wesleyan University and the Columbia University School of Law.

Thank you very much, Mr. Shaw. We look forward to your testimony.

STATEMENT OF THEODORE M. SHAW, PROFESSOR, COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL

Mr. SHAW. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Senator Sessions, and, in his absence, of course, Chairman Leahy.

I have known Sonia Sotomayor for over 4 years. We first met in 1968 as freshmen at Cardinal Spellman High School in the Bronx. We were among a modest number of black and Latino students, perhaps 10 percent of that school's population, in what was one of the most academically challenging high schools in New York City.

It was a time of great change, great challenge. 1968 was the year that Dr. King was assassinated; also, Robert Kennedy; the year of the Chicago Democratic National Convention; and, there was much unrest.

Many of the minority students at Spellman, including Sonia and I, came from the public housing projects of Harlem or the Bronx or the tenement houses that surrounded them. We were shaped by these extraordinary times and by the communities from which we came, for better or worse.

During that time, the light of opportunity began to shine into corners of society that were long neglected for reasons of race and poverty. Many of us are beneficiaries of what has come to be known as affirmative action; that is, the conscious effort to open opportunities to individuals and groups that had been historically discriminated against and excluded from mainstream America.