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SERRANO ANNOUNCES CONFIRMATION OF PUERTO RICAN JUDGE

WASHINGTON, D.C., Oct. 2 -- Congressman José E. Serrano (D-NY) today announced that Congress has confirmed Puerto Rican judge Sonia Sotomayor to the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Judge Sonia Sotomayor, who sits in Southern District of New York since 1992, is the first Hispanic woman appointed to the U.S. Court of Appeals. Clinton nominated Sotomayor in June 1997 and after an arduous process, the Senate ratified her nomination by voting 68-28. The 2nd Circuit Court includes New York, Connecticut and Vermont

"It's great! It was a painful process but the result is extremely important for the Hispanic community," Serrano said, adding, "Judge Sotomayor was born and raised in the South Bronx."

"This is the kind of issue that should be discussed in the classrooms. She is a role model for Hispanics on the Mainland. Judge Sotomayor has set an example of how success is available for all of those who persevere to achieve their goals. She is an inspiration for many Puerto Ricans and for the people in the Bronx who are trying to break the cycle of poverty.

"I thank and congratulate the President and the Senate for this confirmation," Serrano said, who played a key role in her confirmation. Sotomayor also received support from Senator Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY).

Sotomayor, 44 and who grew up in the South Bronx housing project, graduated from Princeton University and Yale Law School. She was a former prosecutor at the office of District Attorney in Manhattan, and an associate and then partner in the New York law firm Pavia & Harcourt. She was also a member of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund.

Judge Sotomayor's nomination has received strong support from the National Puerto Rican Bar Association, the Hispanic National Bar Association, the National Coalition of Women's Bar the Government of Puerto Rico and other groups that pressured to secured her confirmation. In March, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved overwhelmingly her nomination.

Hispanics represent 10 percent of the population in the United States, but less than five percent of all judges are Hispanic. Currently there are 13 vacancies in the U.S. Courts of Appeals and 22 in the U.S. District Court.

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More than 30 percent of the judicial seats in the 9th U.S. Circuit and 40 percent of all seats in the 2nd U.S. Circuit are vacant. These vacancies are causing inefficiencies in the system at the expense of taxpayers and those who have cases pending for years in court.

President Clinton has nominated four Hispanic candidates with outstanding records on the judicial bench to fill some of the vacancies in the federal court system.

“Judge Sotomayor is extremely qualified for this post and I expect the confirmation of other qualified Hispanic nominees”

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