Support Judge Sonia Sotomayor for the U.S. Supreme Court

July 7, 2009

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy, Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Sessions, Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Sessions:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to express our support for the confirmation of Judge Sonia Sotomayor as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. In her seventeen years of service to date as a federal trial and appellate judge, and throughout the course of her entire career, Judge Sotomayor has strongly distinguished herself through her outstanding intellectual credentials and her deep respect for the rule of law, establishing herself beyond question as fully qualified and ready to serve on the Supreme Court.

Judge Sotomayor will be an impartial, thoughtful, and highly-respected addition to the Supreme Court. Her unique personal background is compelling, and will be both a tremendous asset to her on the Court and a historic inspiration to others. Her legal career further demonstrates her qualifications to serve on our nation's highest court. After graduating from Yale Law School, where she served as an editor of the Yale Law Journal, Judge Sotomayor spent five years as a criminal prosecutor in Manhattan. She then spent eight years as a corporate litigator with the firm of Pavia & Harcourt, where she gained expertise in a wide range of civil law areas such as contracts and intellectual property. In 1992, on the bipartisan recommendation of her home-state Senators, President George H.W. Bush appointed her District Judge for the Southern District of New York. In recognition of her outstanding record as a trial judge, President Bill Clinton elevated her to the U.S. Court of Appeals in 1998.

During her long tenure on the federal judiciary, Judge Sotomayor has participated in thousands of cases, and has authored approximately 400 opinions at the appellate level. She has demonstrated a thorough understanding of a wide range of highly complicated legal issues, and has a strong reputation for deciding cases based upon the careful application of the law to the facts of cases. Her record and her inspiring personal story indicate that she understands the judiciary's role in protecting the rights of all Americans, in ensuring equal justice, and in respecting our constitutional values – all within the confines of the law. Moreover, her well-reasoned and pragmatic approach to cases will allow litigants to feel, regardless of the outcome, that they were given a fair day in court.

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Given her stellar record and her reputation for fairness, Judge Sotomayor has garnered broad support across partisan and ideological lines, earning glowing praise from colleagues in the judiciary, law enforcement community, academia, and legal profession who know her best. Her Second Circuit colleague (and also her former law professor) Judge Guido Calabresi describes her as "a marvelous, powerful, profoundly decent person. Very popular on the court because she listens, convinces and can be convinced -- always by good legal argument. She's changed my mind, not an insignificant number of times." Judge Calabresi also discredited concerns about Judge Sotomayor's bench manner, explaining that he compared the substance and tone of her questions with those of his male colleagues and his own questions: "And I must say I found no difference at all." Judge Sotomayor's colleague Judge Roger Miner, speaking of her ideology, argued that "I don't think I'd go as far as to classify her in one camp or another. I think she just deserves the classification of outstanding judge." And New York District Attorney Robert Morgenthau, her first employer out of law school, hailed her for possessing "the wisdom, intelligence, collegiality, and good character needed to fill the position for which she has been nominated."

The undersigned organizations urge you not to be swayed by the efforts of a small number of ideological extremists to tarnish Judge Sotomayor's outstanding reputation as a jurist. These efforts have included blatant mischaracterizations of a handful of her rulings, as well as efforts to smear her as a racist based largely on one line in a speech that critics have taken out of context from the rest of her remarks. The simple fact is that after serving seventeen years on the federal judiciary to date, she has not exhibited any credible evidence whatsoever of having an ideological agenda, and certainly not a racist one. We hope that your committee will strongly reject the efforts at character assassination that have taken place since her nomination.

In short, Judge Sotomayor has an incredibly compelling personal story and a deep respect for the Constitution and the rule of law. Her long and rich experiences as a prosecutor, litigator, and judge match or even exceed those of any of the Justices currently sitting on the Court. Furthermore, she is fair-minded and ethical, and delivers thoughtful rulings in cases that are based upon their merits. For these reasons, the undersigned organizations strongly urge you to vote to confirm Judge Sotomayor. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR) Counsel Rob Randhava at (202) 466-6058, or LCCR Executive Vice President Nancy Zirkin at (202) 263-2880.

Sincerely,

A. Philip Randolph Institute
ACORN
ADA Watch
Advancement Project
Alliance For Retired Americans
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
American Association for Affirmative Action
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO
American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)

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American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Federation of Teachers
Americans for Democratic Action, Inc.
Asian American Justice Center
Campaign for America's Future
Center for Inquiry
Center for Responsible Lending
DC Vote
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Hispanic Federation
Immigration Equality
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement Workers of America, UAW
Japanese American Citizens League
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
League of United Latin American Citizens
Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center
Legal Momentum
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
NAACP
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association
National Association of Consumer Advocates
National Association of Human Rights Workers
National Black Chamber of Commerce
National Black Justice Coalition
National Coalition for Disability Rights (NCDR)
National Congress of Black Women, Inc.
National Disability Rights Network
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Employment Lawyers Association
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Jewish Democratic Council
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)
National Organization for Women
National Minority AIDS Council
National Urban League
NCLR (National Council of La Raza)
People For the American Way
Pride at Work, AFL-CIO
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
USAction
U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Women Employed

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