

on this nomination is scheduled for Thursday, November 6 in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Mr. Lee has dedicated his entire career to enforcing our nation's civil rights laws. He has more than 20 years of experience in a wide-range of areas in civil rights law, including employment discrimination, access to health care, prevention of lead poisoning, public transportation equity, and equal access to education.

The Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights must enforce our nation's civil rights laws for everyone. Mr. Lee is a problem-solver and consensus builder. His work has helped Americans regardless of age, race, and gender. He has enabled thousands of Americans to shatter the glass ceiling.

Mr. Lee has practiced mainstream civil rights law. He does not believe in quotas, which are illegal. He believes in opportunity. To achieve this goal, he has pursued flexible and reasonable remedies that in each instance were approved by a court.

Numerous civil rights groups, women's groups, and elected officials from both parties support Mr. Lee's nomination. The next Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights will have to address a number of potentially divisive issues. There is no doubt that Mr. Lee has the integrity, competence, and experience to lead this division.

In addition, Mr. Lee has agreed to recuse himself from involvement with the California Proposition 209 case, if he is confirmed. This action is entirely appropriate and should help clear the way for his confirmation.

We urge you to support his nomination and report it favorably.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Mikulski, Barbara Boxer,
Patty Murray, Mary L. Landrieu, Carol
Moseley-Braun, Dianne Feinstein.●

NOMINATION OF BILL LAN LEE TO BE ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

● Ms. MOSELEY-BRAUN. Mr. President, earlier this year, I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Bill Lee, President Clinton's nominee for the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. I was impressed with his intelligence, his strong sense of fairness, and his dedication to ensuring that all Americans have the opportunity to enjoy the same basic rights. Today I strongly urge my colleagues on the Senate Judiciary Committee to act favorably on the nomination of Bill Lan Lee.

Mr. Lee has an exceptional background. He is a graduate of Yale University and Columbia University Law School, and has proven his dedication to the public sector by working for the Asian American Legal Defense Fund and the Los Angeles-based Center for Law in the Public Interest. Currently, he serves as western regional counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund. During his 23-years as a civil rights litigator, Mr. Lee has earned a reputation for his legal expertise and his integrity.

In July, the President nominated Mr. Lee to be the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights at the Department of Justice. At the time of his nomination, Mr. Lee was widely praised by both his allies and adversaries as a qualified and competent civil rights at-

torney, and was supported by both Democrats and Republicans. No one questioned his intelligence nor his qualifications to competently serve this country as the Assistant Attorney General.

That is why it is so surprising, in the eleventh hour, to now hear so much opposition to this nomination. The vote on this nomination should be based on Mr. Lee's competence, ability, and character. Instead, some Senators have decided that his nomination should be held hostage to their position on affirmative action. Rather than to fill this position, which has gone vacant for over six months, my colleagues instead have chosen to push their political agenda. I do not believe that this is at all appropriate, nor do I believe that this action is in the best interests of the American people.

I must point out that this is not a lifetime position, nor is it a regulatory position that will out last the President's term. Rather, this position carries a term that is served at the whim of the President. It seems to me that the President, who was elected by the people, should have the right to choose those who will serve under him, that he should have the option of choosing individuals whose personal views reflect his own, so long as those individuals have the requisite competence, ability, and character. But the opposition to Mr. Lee is not based on his abilities, rather, it is based on policy. I do not believe that this is a legitimate reasoning for opposing this particular nomination.

I am especially troubled by this attack on Mr. Lee because I believe it does an injustice to the American dream. The American dream is a major part of what makes this country such a special place. It says that everyone—whether rich or poor, male or female, gay or straight, black or white—everyone should have the opportunity to go as far as their talent and hard work will take them. It's a dream that says that merit, and nothing more, should determine your opportunities.

Mr. Lee is a shining example of this dream becoming reality. Out of adversity came this bright, enthusiastic gentleman who made a career of ensuring that everyone has equal opportunities to share their talents and succeed. In fact, it was this belief in this idealistic view of America that made Mr. Lee pursue this position. Lee insisted in his confirmation hearing that as "a son of immigrants, the opportunity to serve the nation by enforcing the Federal civil rights laws reaffirms [his] belief in the American dream."

Despite this statement, and despite the fact that Mr. Lee has repeatedly assured his critics that he is not in favor of quotas, that he believes every talented and able individual should be given the full opportunity to compete and succeed, and that he would enforce the laws of our country, my colleagues continue to take issue with his nomination by attacking his personal be-

liefs and views on affirmative action. Unfortunately, these baseless allegations, unfounded attacks, and unwarranted comments about Mr. Lee have undermined the first real chance this Senate has had to fill this position with a qualified and competent individual. In short, they are refusing to give this qualified individual the opportunity to stand on his merit.

Mr. President, I thank the American people deserve better, and I believe we do an injustice to them by allowing this position to go empty for this long for no good reason. This is shameful, and I urge my colleagues to reconsider their actions.●

INDEPENDENCE DAY OF LEBANON

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the Lebanese-American Club of Michigan. On this day, November 22, 1997, the club will celebrate its first annual formal dinner.

The Lebanese-American Club of Detroit is to be commended. Through the tireless dedication of its members this organization has strengthened the cultural understanding of Lebanon in the State of Michigan. I am proud of the Lebanese-American community's continual efforts to foster relationships of goodwill. These efforts will go far in enhancing and promoting the community's image and understanding throughout the United States and beyond.

I am honored and delighted to see our community gathering to support Lebanon's independence. Throughout its history, the country of Lebanon and its people have faced difficult and trying circumstances. Yet despite these hardships, the people and leaders of Lebanon continue to hold strong to the belief that independence and security are essential for the country to prosper. This evening there is great cause for celebration. The United States travel ban to Lebanon has been lifted, allowing the people of these two nations to travel freely. Many of you in attendance were steadfast in your belief that this would someday occur and should be applauded for your commitment to this goal.

I am pleased to recognize this event in the U.S. Senate and again, send my best wishes to each of you.●

ARAB-AMERICAN AND CHALDEAN COUNCIL 1997 ANNUAL CIVIC AND HUMANITARIAN AWARDS BANQUET

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to acknowledge an important event which is taking place in the State of Michigan. On this day, December 5, 1997, many have gathered to celebrate the Arab-American and Chaldean Council [ACC] Annual Civic and Humanitarian Awards Banquet. Each of the individuals in attendance deserve special recognition for their commitment and steadfast support of the Arab-American and Chaldean communities.