WILMER, CUTLER & PICKERING
2445 M STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20037-1420
TELEPHONE (202) 663-6000
FACSIMILE (202) 663-6363
WWW.WILMER.COM

SETH P. WAXMAN
DIRECT LINE (202) 663-6800
SWAXMAN@WILMER.COM

520 MADISON AVENUE
NEW YORK, NY 10022
TELEPHONE (212) 230-8800
FACSIMILE (212) 230-8888

100 LIGHT STREET
BALTIMORE, MD 21202
TELEPHONE (410) 986-2800
FACSIMILE (410) 986-2828

1650 TYSONS BOULEVARD
SUITE 950
TYSONS CORNER, VA 22102
TELEPHONE (703) 251-9700
FACSIMILE (703) 251-9797

4 CARLTON GARDENS
LONDON SW7 5AA
TELEPHONE 011 44 20 7872-1000
FACSIMILE 011 44 20 7839-3537

RUE DE LA LOI 15 WETSTRAAT
B-1040 BRUSSELS
TELEPHONE 011 (32) 2285-4900
FACSIMILE 011 (32) 2285-4949

FRIEDRICHSTRASSE 95
D-10117 BERLIN
TELEPHONE 011 (49) 30 2022-6400
FACSIMILE 011 (49) 30 2022-6500

June 24, 2002

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

Dear Chairman Leahy:

We write to express our concern about your recent request that the Department of Justice turn over "appeal recommendations, certiorari recommendations, and amicus recommendations" that Miguel Estrada worked on while in the Office of the Solicitor General.

As former heads of the Office of the Solicitor General -- under Presidents of both parties -- we can attest to the vital importance of candor and confidentiality in the Solicitor General's decisionmaking process. The Solicitor General is charged with the weighty responsibility of deciding whether to appeal adverse decisions in cases where the United States is a party, whether to seek Supreme Court review of adverse appellate decisions, and whether to participate as *amicus curiae* in other high-profile cases that implicate an important federal interest. The Solicitor General has the responsibility of representing the interests not just of the Justice Department, nor just of the Executive Branch, but of the entire federal government, including Congress.

It goes without saying that, when we made these and other critical decisions, we relied on frank, honest, and thorough advice from our staff attorneys, like Mr. Estrada. Our decisionmaking process required the unbridled, open exchange of ideas -- an exchange that simply cannot take place if attorneys have reason to fear that their private recommendations are not private at all, but vulnerable to public disclosure. Attorneys inevitably will hesitate before giving their honest, independent analysis if their opinions are not safeguarded from future disclosure. High-level decisionmaking requires candor, and candor in turn requires confidentiality.

Any attempt to intrude into the Office's highly privileged deliberations would come at the cost of the Solicitor General's ability to defend vigorously the United States' litigation interests -- a cost that also would be borne by Congress itself.

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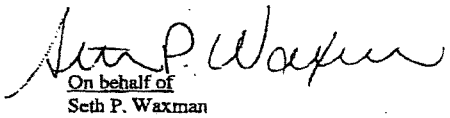
Although we profoundly respect the Senate's duty to evaluate Mr. Estrada's fitness for the federal judiciary, we do not think that the confidentiality and integrity of internal deliberations should be sacrificed in the process.

Sincerely,



On behalf of
Seth P. Waxman
Walter Dellinger
Drew S. Days, III
Kenneth W. Starr
Charles Fried
Robert H. Bork
Archibald Cox

cc: The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
The Honorable Alberto R. Gonzales
The Honorable John D. Ashcroft