Remarks Announcing the Nomination of Ruth Bader Ginsburg To Be a Supreme Court Associate Justice
June 14, 1993

The President. Please be seated. I wish you all a good afternoon, and I thank the Members of the Congress and other interested Americans who are here.

In just a few days when the Supreme Court concludes its term, Justice Byron White will begin a new chapter in his long and productive life. He has served the Court as he has lived, with distinction, intelligence, and honor. And he retires from public service with the deep gratitude of all the American people.

Article II, section 2 of the United States Constitution empowers the President to select a nominee to fill a vacancy on the Supreme Court of the United States. This responsibility is one of the most significant duties assigned to the President by the Constitution. A Supreme Court Justice has life tenure, unlike the President, and along with his or her colleagues decides the most significant questions of our time and shapes the continuing contours of our liberty.

I care a lot about this responsibility, not only because I am a lawyer but because I used to teach constitutional law and I served my State as attorney general. I know well how the Supreme Court affects the lives of all Americans personally and deeply. I know clearly that a Supreme Court Justice should have the heart and spirit, the talent and discipline, the knowledge, common sense, and wisdom to translate the hopes of the American people, as presented in the cases before it, into an enduring body of constitutional law, constitutional law that will preserve our most cherished values that are enshrined in that Constitution and, at the same time, enable the American people to move forward.

That is what I promised the American people in a Justice when I ran for President, and I believe it is a promise that I am delivering on today. After careful reflection, I am proud to nominate for Associate Justice of the Supreme Court Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Co-

I’d also like any newly naturalized Americans to stand up. Do we have any new citizens here? Let’s give them a hand. Look at them. [Applause] Thank you.

Last night when we had the press party here at the White House, perhaps the most moving encounter I had was a couple came through the line; both of them were born in South America. But they had their little child with them who had just been born in the United States, and the child’s T-shirt said “Future President” on it. [Laughter] There you are. Look, there he is right there. Give him a hand, the father of the child. [Applause]

This is a special day. The children remind us of it, and so do our new citizens. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:36 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.
powerful. Judge Ginsburg has also proven her
tect all the American people, not simply the
a sense that the Constitution and the laws pro-
have a place in our legal system, by giving them
people greater hope by telling them that they
off, the outsider in society, and has given those
stood for the individual, the person less well-
record speaks volumes about what is in her
imense character. Quite simply, what's in her
ency, humanity, and fairness. People will find,
more about Ruth Ginsburg's achievements, de-
will have the opportunity to get to know much
judges.
her as one of the Nation's leading centrist
cased a national legal journal in 1991 to name
which she was able to amass a record that
years she has served on the United States Court
happily, won five out of six. For the past 13
before the United States Supreme Court and,
gued six landmark cases on behalf of women
ers, our sisters, and our daughters. She herself
movement for the rights of African-Americans.
Court Justice Thurgood Marshall was to the
women's movement what former Supreme

cases before the Supreme Court in the 1970's.
argued and won many of the women's rights
discrimination, she devoted the next 20 years
the mother of a small child. Having experienced
discrimination, she could not get a job with a law firm in
the early 1960's because she was a woman and
she married 39 years ago as a very young
raising a family with her husband, Marty, whom
of this and a lot of other things as well by
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she married 39 years ago as a very young
woman. Together they had two children, Jane
and James, and they now have two grand-
children. Hers is a remarkable record of distinc-
tion and achievement, both professional and per-
sonal.

In one of her own writings about what it
is like to be a Justice, Judge Ginsburg quotes
Justice Louis Brandeis, who once said, “The
Supreme Court is not a place for solo performers.”
If this is a time for consensus-building on the
Court, and I believe it is, Judge Ginsburg will
be an able and effective architect of that effort.

It is important to me that Judge Ginsburg
came to her views and attitudes by doing, not
merely by reading and studying. Despite her
enormous ability and academic achievements,
she could not get a job with a law firm in
the early 1960's because she was a woman and
the mother of a small child. Having experienced
discrimination, she devoted the next 20 years
of her career to fighting it and making this
country a better place for our wives, our moth-
ers, our sisters, and our daughters. She herself
argued and won many of the women's rights
cases before the Supreme Court in the 1970's.
Many admirers of her work say that she is to
the women's movement what former Supreme
Court Justice Thurgood Marshall was to the
movement for the rights of African-Americans.
I can think of no greater compliment to bestow
on an American lawyer. And she has done all
of this and a lot of other things as well by
raising a family with her husband, Marty, whom
she married 39 years ago as a very young
woman. Together they had two children, Jane
and James, and they now have two grand-
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sonal.

During the selection process, we reviewed the
qualifications of more than 40 potential nomi-
nees. It was a long, exhaustive search. And dur-
ing that time we identified several wonderful
Americans whom I think could be outstanding
nominees to the Supreme Court in the future.

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rior, Bruce Babbitt, whose strong legal background as Arizona’s attorney general and recent work balancing the competing interests of environmentalists and others in the very difficult issues affecting the American West made him a highly qualified candidate for the Court. And I had the unusual experience, something unique to me, of being flooded with calls all across America from Babbitt admirers who pleaded with me not to put him on the Court and take him away from the Interior Department. I also carefully considered the chief judge of the first circuit, Judge Stephen Breyer of Boston, a man whose character, confidence, and legal scholarship impressed me very greatly. I believe he has a very major role to play in public life. I believe he is superbly qualified to be on the Court. And I think either one of these candidates, as well as the handful of others whom I closely considered, may well find themselves in that position someday in the future.

Let me say in closing that Ruth Bader Ginsburg cannot be called a liberal or a conservative; she has proved herself too thoughtful for such labels. As she herself put it in one of her articles, and I quote, “The greatest figures of the American judiciary have been independent thinking individuals with open but not empty minds; individuals willing to listen and to learn. They have exhibited a readiness to reexamine their own premises, liberal or conservative, as thoroughly as those of others.” That, I believe, describes Judge Ginsburg. And those, I too believe, are the qualities of a great Justice.

If, as I believe, the measure of a person’s values can best be measured by examining the life the person lives, then Judge Ginsburg’s values are the very ones that represent the best in America. I am proud to nominate this path-breaking attorney, advocate, and judge to be the 107th Justice to the United States Supreme Court.

[At this point, Judge Ginsburg expressed her appreciation to the President and discussed her background and her view of the position.]

Q. The withdrawal of the Guinier nomination, sir, and your apparent focus on Judge Breyer and your turn, late, it seems, to Judge Ginsburg may have created an impression, perhaps unfair, of a certain zig-zag quality in the decision-making process here. I wonder, sir, if you could kind of walk us through it and perhaps disabuse us of any notion we might have along those lines. Thank you.

The President. I have long since given up the thought that I could disabuse some of you of turning any substantive decision into anything but political process. How you could ask a question like that after the statement she just made is beyond me.

Goodbye. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:07 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks on the President’s Council on Sustainable Development

June 14, 1993

Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for being here. It has been a year since the Earth summit in Rio. I think you might be interested to know that a year ago at the Earth summit in Rio I placed a call to Senator Al Gore of Tennessee to get a report on the goings-on there from him and from Senator Wirth of Colorado and to begin the process by which we came together as a team. Not very long after that I asked Al Gore to join the Democratic ticket, and the rest was history.

I don’t want to make any bones about it. When we had our first very long meeting, one thing that then-Senator Gore said was that he wanted to be part of a ticket that, if elected, could put the environment back on the front burner in American public life and do it in a way that would be good for the economy, not bad for the economy, do it in a way that would bring the American people together, not divide them. All the policy positions that the Vice President just announced that we have taken to change the direction of the previous administrations and, more importantly, to go beyond politics to embrace a new philosophy of uniting our goals of preserving the environment