

July 1, 2005

The Honorable Senator
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator,

As organizations of varying faith denominations, we hold differing views on judicial nominations. Some of us have taken positions on judicial nominees while others have not, but together, we join in a common belief that the Senate and the President must uphold the process of “advise and consent” as nominees to the Supreme Court are considered. As we prepare for the first nomination of a Supreme Court justice in over a decade, we write to share with you our belief in the importance of openness and bi-partisan consultation throughout the nomination and confirmation processes.

As you well know, the nine members of the Supreme Court have a unique and significant role as interpreters of the rights and liberties enjoyed by Americans of all faiths and no faith. The same Constitution that guarantees our religious freedoms also endows the Senate with the responsibility to advise and consent on judicial nominations. This model was followed during the most recent Supreme Court vacancies when, prior to nominating Justices Ginsburg and Breyer, President Clinton consulted with then-Senate Judiciary Ranking Member Orrin Hatch. In light of this important precedent, it is essential that the Senate and President engage in a non-partisan and thorough debate on the merits of any future nominees. Anything less would fail to respect the significance of a lifetime appointment to our country’s highest court.

The importance of a lifetime appointment to the Supreme Court cannot be overstated. A justice selected today will potentially serve for two or more generations – interpreting American law well into our children’s lifetimes. For these reasons, the temperament, qualifications and judicial philosophy of any Supreme Court nominee should be thoroughly and carefully examined by the Senate.

The confirmation process must also be free of the divisive and dangerous practice of using Senators’ and nominees’ faiths as a wedge. Just as nominees should be evaluated based on their public records and actions and not their faith traditions, Senators’ faiths should never be called into question based on their support for or opposition to a particular nominee.

An open and bipartisan consultative process is critical to ensuring that the act of nominating and confirming a Supreme Court justice is fair, legitimate, and beyond reproach. We hope that you agree and will work to ensure a confirmation process and Supreme Court befitting this great nation.

Sincerely,

African American Ministers in Action – A Project of People For the American Way
American Friends Service Committee
The American Jewish Committee
Catholics for a Free Choice
Central Conference of American Rabbis
Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life
Disciples Justice Action Network (Disciples of Christ)

Continued on page 2

Faith Action Network of People For the American Way
Friends Committee on National Legislation
General Board of Church & Society, United Methodist Church
Hindu American Foundation
The Interfaith Alliance
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Reconstructionist Federation
Jewish Women International
Justice and Witness Ministries, United Church of Christ
Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation
Muslim Public Affairs Council
NA'AMAT USA
National Association of Muslim Lawyers
National Council of Jewish Women
NETWORK: A Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Presbyterian Church USA, Washington Office
Progressive Jewish Alliance
The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Sikh Coalition
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
Women of Reform Judaism

cc: President George W. Bush