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October 21, 2015

VIA FAX AND REGULAR MAIL

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
U.S. Senate Minority Leader
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Judicial Vacancies at Superior Court of the District of Columbia

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Reid:

I write on behalf of the Women's Bar Association of the District of Columbia (WBA) to urge the Senate to vote on the pending nominations to fill the five vacancies on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. Founded in 1917, the WBA is one of the oldest and largest voluntary bar associations in Washington, DC. We represent approximately 850 members in the Washington, DC area and are well positioned to offer insight into the adverse consequences resulting from the Senate's refusal to advance the President's nominations to the DC Superior Court.

The high number of vacancies at the Superior Court disproportionately impacts our city's most vulnerable citizens. The DC Superior Court's Family Court, which hears our most sensitive and pressing cases—including cases involving abuse and neglect, adoption, domestic relations, child support, and mental health—currently has only four judges that are handling five calendars of domestic relations and neglect cases, translating into nearly 638 cases per judge. It is crucial that such sensitive cases be addressed in a timely manner, yet the high number of vacancies prevents the Court from doing so.

Women's Bar Association of the District of Columbia

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The Superior Court in general hears over 100,000 cases per year, including those before Family Court judges. These include cases pending before the Landlord and Tenant, Criminal, and Domestic Violence calendars, which typically involve sensitive issues that must be addressed without delay. A typical Superior Court judge currently has hundreds of cases on his or her calendar. This is unsustainable in the long-term and, more importantly, easily rectified given the five nominations that are currently before the Senate. Moreover, the White House is expected to send two additional nominees to the Senate in the next 45 days, bringing the vacancy total to seven.

It is imperative that the vacancies on the DC Superior Court be filled to ensure equal access to justice for District of Columbia residents. We strongly urge the Senate to act immediately to address the pending nominations and fill the vacancies on the D.C. Superior Court.

On behalf of the WBA, I appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan M.C. Kovarovics". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan M.C. Kovarovics
President