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November 19, 2024

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VIA WEB FORM & US MAIL
The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Pending Nominations to the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and to the District of Columbia Court of Appeals

Dear Honorable Senator Schumer:

The Washington Council of Lawyers, founded in 1971, is a voluntary bar association that promotes access to justice, pro bono service, and the practice of public interest law. We are writing to express our concern about the ongoing judicial vacancies in the District of Columbia's Superior Court and the Court of Appeals. Six nominees for seats on the Superior Court have been approved in committee and are awaiting Senate floor action. Two nominees for the D.C. Court of Appeals have also been voted out of committee and are ready for a floor vote. We urge you to quickly schedule votes on these eight pending judicial nominees.

The need for swift action is particularly urgent given that so little time remains in the 118th Congress. As you know, if the Senate does not act during this legislative session, the process must start all over - the White House must re-submit nominations for these vacant positions, the relevant committee may want to hold hearings, and committee approval will again be necessary. Needlessly repeating the process would be a waste of legislative resources and will only exacerbate the current strain on our court system.

Seven current nominees were approved at the committee level months ago (on July 31, 2024). The eighth has been awaiting a floor vote since January 31, 2024. The lack of recent progress in confirming these nominees significantly impacts the current judges and their staff, who are stretched beyond capacity. More importantly, litigants are encountering life-altering delays.

The current judicial vacancies at the Superior Court impair its ability to deliver speedy justice to many of our community's most vulnerable populations and result in unsustainable caseloads. For example, Family Court judges deciding issues such as abuse and neglect, juvenile delinquency, and mental health matters cannot always provide the prompt adjudication necessary to protect the District's children and other individuals. The same is true in landlord-tenant and other critical civil cases. In addition, judges on the Court's criminal docket sometimes must double- and triple-book trial dates to comply with speedy trial statutes.

Finally, the D.C. Court of Appeals, our court of last resort and the highest court in our local court system, has been operating with two vacancies for some time. This deficit is serious. As you may know, the Court of Appeals issues opinions on a variety of critical issues, including cases that impact businesses, the local economy, contractual obligations, and tort liability, to name a few. Without adequate judicial resources, it is more difficult for the Court to address the myriad legal issues facing our community.

There is an acute need to swiftly confirm these eight nominees to ensure the efficient and effective adjudication of cases in the District of Columbia. We urge you to immediately schedule votes to confirm the pending judicial nominees without further delay.

Should you require any information, or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully submitted,

Henry Floyd Jr.

Henry Floyd, Jr.
President
Washington Council of Lawyers

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American Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists
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Capital Area Muslim Bar Association's (CAMBA)
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