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OF DALLAS, TEXAS

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June 6, 2007

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VIA FIRST CLASS MAIL

Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary
433 Russell Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Nomination of Leslie Southwick to the United States Court of
Appeals for the Fifth Circuit

Dear Senator Leahy:

The J.L. Turner Legal Association ("JLTLA"), the premier organization for African-American attorneys in Dallas, Texas, writes to register its opposition to the nomination of Leslie Southwick to the United States Court of Appeals to the Fifth Circuit. In so doing, we join with Senator Barack Obama, the Magnolia Bar Association, the Alliance for Justice and the National Employment Lawyers Association, among others, in voicing concerns about Judge Southwick's fitness for elevation to a lifetime appointment to the federal appellate bench.

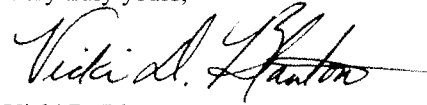
More significantly, the JLTLA is deeply disturbed by the Bush Administration's consistent and highly objectionable pattern of selecting ultra-conservative, non-diverse candidates to serve on the most racially diverse federal circuit in the country. The Fifth Circuit, comprised of Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas, is home to more African-Americans than any other federal circuit, with the possible exception of the Fourth Circuit. Only one African-American judge, Carl Stewart, currently serves on the Fifth Circuit. Bush has, moreover, nominated no African-Americans to the Fifth Circuit. After Charles Pickering and Mike Wallace, Judge Southwick's nomination could only very generously be described as yet another "slap in the face" to the diverse populations of the Fifth Circuit.

Further, this appointment reflects the Bush Administration's clear disregard for the will of the American people given the significantly dynamic change in Congress. The dramatic outcome of the midterm Congressional election signals that Americans are seeking a new landscape rather than leaving an even more conservative footprint on what is now one of the most conservative Circuits in the nation.

Historically, the Fifth Circuit served as the vanguard for the advancement of civil and human rights, particularly with regard to the implementation of the U.S. Supreme Court's dictates following its historic ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education et al.* The last 20 years, however, have marked a notable retrenchment in the Fifth Circuit's commitment to civil rights. Judge Southwick's elevation to the Fifth Circuit would only strengthen the conservative leanings of this Court, and further alienate the diverse citizens of this Circuit.

We trust that you will call upon all of your colleagues on the Judiciary Committee to reject this nomination, and call on the President to select a consensus nominee that would bring greater balance to the Fifth Circuit.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Vicki D. Blanton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Vicki D. Blanton, Esq.
President, JLTLA

cc: Honorable Barack Obama (via U.S. Mail and Electronic Mail)
Honorable Harry Reid (via U.S. Mail and Electronic Mail)
Honorable John Cornyn (via U.S. Mail and Electronic Mail)
Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison (via U.S. Mail and Electronic Mail)