



**Statement on the
Judicial Confirmation Process for Nominees to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the
Sixth Circuit**

July 29, 2003

The undersigned organizations are writing to express our grave concerns about the state of the judicial confirmation process. In the past nine years, what was once a thoughtful process involving dialogue between the White House and the Senate -- Democrats and Republicans -- has become unnecessarily acrimonious. Instead of bridges, there are stark battle lines between the two branches of government that have co-equal responsibility for the nomination and confirmation of federal judges. Attempts to marginalize those who represent millions of Americans and charges of religious discrimination have tainted the current process and only serve to undermine the public's faith in the judiciary.

The federal judiciary is vital to our democracy. Judges are charged with the responsibility to dispense justice and to give life and direction to our laws and our Constitution. With that important responsibility in mind, the President and the Senate have a shared duty to seek the nomination and confirmation of men and women who have the requisite intelligence, temperament, and commitment to equal justice under the law. Recent efforts to capture the courts and make them the tool of a particular ideological perspective are disturbing and contrary to our fundamental obligation to ensure equal justice under law for all individuals. Such efforts have led to the abandonment of a fair and transparent process -- the kind of process that formerly marked the work of the Judiciary Committee and the United States Senate.

The vacancies on the Sixth Circuit reflect the breakdown in the confirmation process. Moderate and well-qualified nominees sent to the Senate by President Clinton were never acted upon. Understandably, as the representatives of the interests of the people of Michigan in this process, Senators Levin and Stabenow object to the Senate leadership's decision to move forward on Bush administration nominations for those same seats -- including the July 30, 2003 hearing scheduled for Henry W. Saad -- despite the rejection of their repeated pleas for an opportunity to engage in real consultation with the White House in the selection of nominees for these seats.

A bipartisan commission similar to the one that already exists in Wisconsin, is the only way to amicably and fairly resolve the current differences between the White House and Michigan's Senators. Such a commission would respect the Senate's -- and the home state senators' -- historic and important role in the confirmation process, and give the public, in this case the people of Michigan and the Sixth Circuit, the assurance that the confirmation process is fair and just. We urge the Senate Republican leadership to end the acrimony that has come to mark the judicial confirmation process, and support the sensible approach offered by Senators Levin and Stabenow.



ADA Watch/National Coalition for Disability Rights
AFL-CIO
Alliance for Justice
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO
American Association of University Women
American Association of University Women of Michigan
Americans for Democratic Action
Earthjustice
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Abortion Federation
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women and Families
NOW LDEF
People For the American Way
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Sierra Club