

January 8, 2013

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Senate Dirksen
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary
151 Senate Dirksen Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Grassley:

We write as members of an ad hoc group of African American AmLaw partners and Fortune 500 general counsel to strongly support the nomination of Debo P. Adegbile to become the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights at the United States Department of Justice.

Mr. Adegbile's public advocacy on behalf of ethnic and racial minorities in the areas of voting rights, education, and access to courts, exemplifies a strong commitment to participatory democracy by all United States citizens. Through his many speaking engagements—to audiences at every stage of the educational spectrum, from law, college, high, middle, and primary school students—we can readily discern his commitment to educating the next generation about the need for civil rights advocacy and protecting voting rights in particular. He is a thought leader among civil rights lawyers and someone who has demonstrated through both words and deeds a true commitment to equality in America. In short, he is highly qualified to lead the Department of Justice's esteemed Civil Rights Division.

Although we do not all personally know Mr. Adegbile, a review of his responses to the Committee's questionnaire for non-judicial nominees evidences a breathtaking array of unparalleled civil rights litigation experience for a contemporary attorney who has practiced less than twenty years. While we have not encountered Mr. Adegbile in our representative matters, as members of the Judiciary Committee you have. By all accounts, he has admirably served on Chairman Leahy's staff since last year. The weekly Committee markups and hearings provide all members of this Committee ample opportunity to observe Mr. Adegbile in action and we have no doubt that he has demonstrated the dignity and professionalism that are his hallmarks.

Finally, we understand that the Fraternal Order of Police recently announced its opposition to Mr. Adegbile's nomination. We deeply admire the men and women first-responders who populate the FOP but contend that the opposition is misguided. Prior to joining the Committee staff, Mr. Adegbile was principally a civil litigator dedicating some eighty percent (80%) of his practice to civil proceedings. Mr. Adegbile's advocacy on behalf of a single individual on death row while serving at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund should not serve to disqualify him from the

position to which he has been nominated. Indeed, as he noted in his questionnaire, LDF's "founding charter places special emphasis on the mission of representing poor African Americans." In our view, lawyers serve as detached professionals and should not be cloaked with the misdeeds of their clients.

For all of the foregoing reasons, we urge the Committee to advance Mr. Adegbile's nomination to the full Senate so that he may be promptly confirmed.

Sincerely,

Benjamin F. Wilson
Managing Partnerⁱ
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