

June 3, 2025

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Durbin:

We write in enthusiastic support of the nomination of Zachary Bluestone to the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri. As former senior officials in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Missouri, we represent a range of political affiliations and backgrounds. We have diverse views on politics and judicial philosophy. But we are united in our view that Zachary Bluestone possesses the professional qualifications, legal acumen, and judicial temperament necessary to serve with distinction as a district judge for the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri. We endorse his nomination without reservation.

Zack is a St. Louis native and joined our office in 2020. As an Assistant United States Attorney, Zack was part of our Violent Crimes Unit, where he prosecuted carjackings, robberies, firearm offenses, and drug trafficking. In that role, he exceeded expectations, quickly mastering thorny legal issues in appeals and postconviction challenges while managing the real-world challenges inherent in prosecuting violent crimes. Zack habitually excelled in every aspect of the most complex cases, both at the district court and at the Eighth Circuit. Zack's legal acumen was immediately evident, so we tasked Zack with some of the Office's most important legal issues, including crafting the Office's positions on retroactive Guideline amendments and compassionate-release priorities during the pandemic.

In recognition of his exceptional performance, Zack was promoted to serve as the Office's Appellate Chief after only nine months of service. Often, that position requires years if not a decade of experience, but Zack's legal skills fast-tracked him into that role. And there, he has thrived. As Appellate Chief, Zack oversees every aspect of the Office's appellate practice for both civil and criminal matters. He determines the Office's legal positions, approves all appellate briefing, and advocates for or against further appellate review in light of adverse lower court decisions. He has

briefed and argued numerous appeals on his own, as well as mentoring other attorneys and supervising appeals. Zack does all this on top of advising office leadership on emerging legal issues in district court, taking on special projects, and spearheading responses to substantive changes in the law.

At the same time, Zack maintains a heavy trial caseload while managing the Office's appeals. That includes carrying a criminal docket involving violent crimes in complex cases. For example, while Appellate Chief, Zack volunteered shortly before trial to co-chair a sprawling murder-for-hire trial requiring a thorough review of thousands of documents, hours of video, and expert reports. The case resulted in a conviction following a seven-day jury trial.

As you can see, Zack has been involved in legal analyses and decision-making in pivotal areas commensurate with leaders in the office with far more years of experience. Simply put, the quality and gravity of Zack's work exceeds what many lawyers will do in their entire careers. Zack works harder than anyone in the office and is always ready to help his colleagues—no matter how menial the task—to further the interests of the Office and the federal government. He combines legal brilliance with respect for the rule of law and a practical command of the nuts and bolts of trial litigation. But most importantly, Zack is not just a gifted lawyer; he is a loyal friend and a person of deep integrity and humility. We are entirely confident that all these qualities will shine through if Zack is confirmed as a district judge for the Eastern District of Missouri. We respectfully urge the Senate to promptly consider and confirm Zack.

Sincerely,

St. Louis County Circuit Judge Thomas Albus, former Senior Litigation Counsel for the Eastern District of Missouri

Carrie Costantin, former Acting U.S. Attorney and First Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Missouri

James E. Crowe, Jr., former Criminal Chief for the Eastern District of Missouri

Jeff Jensen, former U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Missouri

Michael Reilly, Former Senior Litigation Counsel and Violent Crime Supervisor for the Eastern District of Missouri