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October 26, 2017

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

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: *Letter in Support of The Honorable Elizabeth L. Branch's Nomination to be the United States Circuit Judge for the Eleventh Circuit*

Dear Senator Grassley, Senator Feinstein, and Members of the Committee on the Judiciary:

This letter is written in support of President Donald J. Trump's nomination of Judge Elizabeth L. Branch to serve as a United States Circuit Judge for the Eleventh Circuit.

I was honored to serve as a professional colleague of Judge Branch at the United States Department of Homeland Security ("DHS") in its infancy. Through that bonding experience, Judge Branch became a close personal friend of mine and of my family. She is affectionately known by my five children as "Ms. Lisa." In the time that I have known Judge Branch, I have been consistently impressed by her character, integrity, intelligence, knowledge of the law, grace, sense of decorum, humor, work ethic and most importantly her fairness to all. I give her my highest personal recommendation.

Although we both practiced law in Georgia, we had never crossed paths until we worked together in Washington, D.C. I first met Lisa Branch in late March of 2004, when we both worked in the Office of General Counsel at DHS (the "OGC"). I served as Counsel to the General Counsel (akin to the Chief of Staff) and she served as Associate General Counsel for Rules and Legislation. It quickly became evident to me that Lisa Branch was both an exceptional lawyer and an even more exceptional human being. Some of the most challenging work in the OGC was in her division. Among other things, she had primary responsibility for assisting the General Counsel in overseeing the coordination and review of all DHS regulations

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that were to be signed by the Secretary. Because of the pressing need for mission-critical security regulations the work load was crushing. But she always handled her responsibilities with tremendous intelligence, energy, organizational skills, attention to detail and collegiality. I was so impressed with her ability to juggle it all and stay calm throughout. She personified grace under pressure.

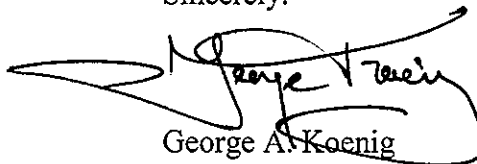
She worked tirelessly to balance the needs and priorities of the various constituencies – while often working with limited resources and personnel to assist her. She did a first class job of dealing with some difficult personalities and thorny legal issues. She was never afraid to roll up her sleeves and do the hard work of getting it right. To me, these are exceptional qualities and the types of qualities that I most respect in a Judge. Every advocate knows that they may lose, but we all deserve to be treated fairly and to before a Judge who does her homework and is prepared. I know that Lisa Branch is and will continue to be that type of Judge because I have seen her commitment to excellence and fairness to all with my own eyes.

Let me end with a story that I think captures the essence of Lisa Branch. While at DHS, I once noticed that she wore a necklace with a West Point ring on it. She would occasionally fiddle with it when things became very stressful. I asked her to tell me about it and she informed me that it was her late Grandfather's ring: she wore it to remind herself of the values he stood for and the West Point Motto: Duty. Honor. Country. As a Marine Corps veteran myself, I was deeply moved by what motivated her to serve at DHS. She was not motivated by personal ambition or selfish interests, but rather love of country and a commitment to public service. She has been a close friend of mine ever since!

I give him Judge Branch my highest recommendation and genuinely hope that you will confirm her to this extremely important position as soon as possible. She will be diligent. She will be fair. She will do her best every day to get it right.

Please let me know if I can provide any other information in support of Judge Branch. I can be reached at (678) 539-6171.

Sincerely.



George A. Koenig