



**Kenneth P. Thompson**  
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January 10, 2014

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
226 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Grassley:

I write to express my strong and unreserved support for Debo Patrick Adegbile, Esq., to be confirmed as the Assistant Attorney General of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice. I have known and admired Debo, a fellow graduate of New York University School of Law, for well over 10 years, and I cannot think of a more effective, respected, accomplished, and passionate advocate to lead the Division.

The Department of Justice, and the Civil Rights Division more particularly, plays an important and unique role in combating unlawful discrimination and upholding and defending the civil and constitutional rights of all Americans, with a special charge to protect the most vulnerable among us. I know this well, having had the privilege, earlier in my professional career as a federal prosecutor, to investigate and prosecute important cases to vindicate the rights of individuals whose civil rights had been violated. In addition, some years ago in private practice, I worked collaboratively with Senator Charles Schumer and Brooklyn's Congressional delegation to get the Department of Justice to reopen the investigation of the



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horrific 1955 murder of 14-year-old Emmitt Till, the young African American boy from Chicago, whose body was thrown into Mississippi's Tallahatchie River by a group of white men, after they had beaten him brutally and gouged out one of his eyes -- all because the young boy had purportedly whistled at a white woman. Emmitt Till's murder was one of the most pivotal events in our nation's struggle to create a more perfect union during the era of the Civil Rights movement.

In this connection, the Division would be well-served by a leader whose resolute belief in the rule of law and the enduring principles that make our nation great drives its mission to do critically important work. Without doubt, as one of the preeminent civil rights attorneys and advocates of *his* generation, Debo has the integrity, perspective, and capacity to be an exceptional leader of the Division.

During his decade at the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, the nation's first civil rights law firm, Debo worked on significant and complex impact litigation in trial and appellate courts. Over time, through his hard work and penchant for strong results, he steadily rose in the organization's ranks to serve in various leadership positions, including director of litigation and Acting President and Director-Counsel. Notably, he twice defended the constitutionality of the Voting Rights Act in oral argument before the U.S. Supreme Court -- a victory that, undoubtedly, has helped to preserve a law President Reagan once called "the crown jewel of American liberties." In 2006, the U.S. Senate unanimously reauthorized this important law.





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Additionally, Debo's impressive legal acumen and success as an advocate are not too surprising, given that he follows in the large footsteps of his two mentors at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, namely the late A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., a civil rights giant who was one of our nation's most passionate and unyielding voices for equality, and Ted Wells, who is one of the best trial lawyers in the country. At Paul Weiss, a prominent corporate law firm, Debo gained his footing as an excellent litigator and trial attorney. He capably represented the interests of major corporations and government officials in complex patent, antitrust, employment, and contract matters. As important, he demonstrated equally remarkable skill working on several high profile pro bono matters.

Debo's best-in-class professional skill, integrity, considered judgment and perspective, and tremendous work ethic stand as the hallmarks that have helped to distinguish him throughout an impressive career. What is equally as important to consider is how Debo embodies the very essence of the American Dream. He is the son of immigrants from Ireland and Nigeria, whose family once suffered through a period of homelessness and, at one time, lived in one of New York City's most notorious welfare hotels. Poverty served as a mere impediment for Debo, as he has made the most of his opportunities and talents, ultimately carving out a professional career as an advocate par excellence, including his current role as Senior Counsel to this very Committee.

Debo Patrick Adegbile exemplifies the greatest aspiration of our nation: that when you give a talented child an opportunity to develop intellectual firepower, he or she can develop the courage and capacity to promote the greater good for everyone. He has the experience, intellect, leadership ability, integrity, and deep commitment to civil rights, to serve our country well as the Division's chief architect and leader. Additionally, his rise from humble beginnings and



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demonstrated commitment to public service, no doubt, will serve as an inspiration to his colleagues and to the children of our nation.

For all of the reasons set forth in this letter, I hope that the Senate will promptly confirm Debo as the Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "K. Thompson", written over the word "Sincerely,".

Kenneth P. Thompson