

Laura Elizabeth Penland

480 John Wesley Dobbs Avenue NE
Unit 605
Atlanta, GA 30312

September 3, 2023

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: *Letter of Support for Nominee Judge Eumi K. Lee for the Northern District of California*

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Graham:

I write this letter in support of Judge Eumi Lee's nomination to serve as District Court Judge for the Northern District of California. I am presently employed by Compass Group, NA, and own Chainsaw Communications, a strategic communications company primarily serving support workers in the healthcare industry.

I grew up with Judge Lee in Oak Ridge, Tennessee in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains. The topography played an important role for kids in the 1970s, as life-long friendships were formed while scrambling through forests, playing in creeks and riding banana-seat bikes over the mountain roads that connected our homes. As I have watched my friend build her career, we often come back to how we found each other in the woods, coordinating packs of kids to build forts or fill coffee cans with blackberries on any given day. It is with distinct pleasure and pride to know that a woman whose leadership style first emerged in the mountains of Appalachia is a nominee to serve in the federal justice system.

Oak Ridge has a unique place in history, one that taught us early on how powerful ideas could impact the world. My grandfather had a sixth-grade education and was recruited from Narrows, Virginia to work at the Y-12 National Security Complex, aware only that his skills and aptitude were essential to the war effort. We grew up where it didn't matter where you came from or what your parents did for work, just that every person's contribution mattered. Judge Lee embraced this culture of collaboration and community as an athlete, an academic and student government officer. Her boundless energy and ability to get a bunch of teenagers to focus and make decisions was magnetic and motivational. As an adult in the business world today, I would describe Judge Lee's style then and now as servant leadership, guided by the outcome that will deliver the most benefit for the greater good.

Because of this, I have not been surprised by the trajectory of Judge Lee's career, her association work, and helping others navigate a path in the legal profession. Her ability to balance her career, community work, family and friends is also not surprising, she's always been great at it. Countless times she has rallied our crew from all over the world to celebrate, to grieve and to plug into a cherished support system when there is a friend in need. We both get back to Tennessee whenever we can, not just for the milestone events, but for the ordinary moments when we reconnect with the place itself—paddling on the Clinch, taking in a Friday night football game and pizza at Big Ed's. It's joyful and grounding to be surrounded by the beauty and character of Appalachia, nurtured by a community that is still cheering us on.

I appreciate you taking the time to learn about Judge Lee beyond her professional credentials, to better understand some of what shaped her leadership style, focus, and commitment to her community. I am fortunate to call her a friend, and I am grateful for the opportunity to support her nomination to serve as District Court Judge for the Northern District of California.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Laura E. Penland". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with the first name "Laura" being more prominent than the last name "Penland".

Laura "Beth" Penland