



NATIONAL
NATIVE AMERICAN
BAR ASSOCIATION

September 25, 2023

Senator Richard Durbin, Chairman
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
Hart Senate Office Building, SH 711
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Lindsay Graham, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
Russell Senate Office Building, SR 211
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Support for Shanlyn Park for U.S. District Court for the District of Hawai‘i

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Graham:

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), and the National Native American Bar Association (NNABA) write in support of Judge Shanlyn Park for one of the judicial vacancies on the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawai‘i.

The increased representation of Native Americans, including American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, in the federal judiciary is a shared priority of NCAI, NARF, and NNABA. Our organizations collectively represent a substantial constituency of Native American Tribal Nations, Native communities, legal professionals, and citizenry that is particularly representative of those impacted by judicial appointments. NCAI is the oldest, largest, and most representative Native American and Alaska Native tribal organization in the country, serving the broad interests of tribal governments and communities. For more than 50 years, NARF has been the leading non-profit law firm representing the interests of Native American, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native governments, individuals, and organizations throughout the United States who otherwise might have gone without adequate representation. NNABA is an organization whose members include Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian attorneys, Indian law practitioners and professors, as well as tribal court judges and advocates. Cases involving Native Americans and their legal issues traditionally have been heard primarily in federal courts, and it is imperative that federal court judges are well-versed in the political status, legal principles, and human rights of Tribal Nations and Native individuals.

Judge Park is highly qualified for a federal judgeship. She is an experienced judge and before her appointment to the state court where she currently serves, she was an exceptionally accomplished litigator with experience litigating in state and federal courts, on complex criminal and civil matters, in private practice and in public service as a federal prosecutor. Judge Park has a demonstrated exceptional commitment to volunteerism and community service, reflecting her strong ties to Hawai‘i and her devotion to the state where she was born, raised, educated, raised, and has worked throughout her career.

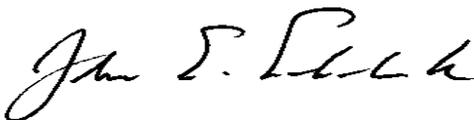
Judge Park's background as a Native Hawaiian and her deep ties to Native communities in Hawai'i merit strong consideration. Many issues of daily life for people in Native communities, including Native Hawaiians, are controlled by federal statutes and federal common law. Despite the impact of federal court decisions on Native communities, they have been historically under-represented in the federal judiciary. Currently, of the more than 870 authorized federal judgeships, only six serve on the federal bench from American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities. If the federal judiciary reflected nationwide demographics, there would be more than 14 Native judges serving as federal judges. If appointed and confirmed, Judge Park would be the first Native woman, and the first Native Hawaiian woman, federal judge in Hawai'i. This is especially important because Native Hawaiians are the indigenous people of all the lands making up this district, and the Native Hawaiian community comprises 20% of the population served by the district. We believe that Judge Park's knowledge and experience are vitally important for the federal judiciary, particularly in a location like the District of Hawai'i.

NCAI, NARF, and NNABA are proud to support Judge Park. We hope that the United States Senate will move swiftly to confirm this excellent and historic nominee. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact us as well as NCAI Legal and Policy Director Ryan Seelau, rseelau@ncai.org and NARF Staff Attorney Morgan Saunders, msaunders@narf.org.

Sincerely,



Larry Wright, Jr., Executive Director
National Congress of American Indians



John E. Echohawk, Executive Director
Native American Rights Fund



Makalika Naholowaa, President
National Native American Bar Association

cc:

The Honorable Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senate
Hart Senate Office Building, SH-109
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Brian Schatz
United States Senate
Hart Senate Office Building, SH-722
Washington, DC 20510