

July 25, 2022

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

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

Dear Chair Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

As former federal prosecutors with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Minnesota, we endorse the appointment of federal judges who are committed to the cause of justice and will faithfully enforce the rule of law. That is why we write to express our strong support for the nomination of Jerry W. Blackwell to serve on the U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota.

After graduating from the University of North Carolina School of Law, Mr. Blackwell distinguished himself as a civil practitioner and has earned a national reputation as a skilled and persuasive advocate. He has served as trial counsel for numerous large corporations and has frequently given presentations on his winning trial strategies. Mr. Blackwell has represented clients in federal and state court in 47 states and internationally. He is well-qualified to serve the busy District of Minnesota as a trial court judge.

While Mr. Blackwell has been primarily a civil practitioner, we all had the opportunity to watch him try one of the most significant criminal cases in Minnesota history when he served as a Special Prosecutor in the trial of Derrick Chauvin for the 2020 murder of George Floyd. In accepting an appointment as a Special Assistant Minnesota Attorney General, Mr. Blackwell stepped back from his private practice and became a public servant, working on behalf of the people of the State of Minnesota as a *pro bono* prosecutor.

In his powerful advocacy on behalf of the state, Mr. Blackwell made clear in his opening statement that the case was "...not about all police or all policing" who he recognized as having difficult jobs and "sometimes have to make split-second life and death decisions." He described the law enforcement officers who would testify in the trial as committed "men and women of the Minneapolis Police Department who do a fantastic job," and "take very seriously preserving the sanctity of life."

Therefore, as experienced former federal prosecutors from across the political spectrum, we strongly recommend your favorable consideration of Jerry Blackwell's nomination to the U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota. He is a person of great integrity and is supremely well qualified to serve as a federal district court judge.

Respectfully,

Julie E. Allyn
Ann M. Anaya
Michael Dees
Joseph T. Dixon III
Nicole A. Engisch
Thomas B. Heffelfinger
Joan Humes
B. Todd Jones
Carol Kayser
Doug Kelley
James Lackner
Benjamin Langner
John R. Marti
Erica McDonald
William Michael
Richard Newberry
James Rosenbaum
Surya Saxena
Perry Sekus
Steven L. Schleicher
Dan Scott
Robert Small
Omar Syed
Kevin Ueland
Lola Velazquez-Aguilu