

September 8, 2022

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

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

Re: Nomination of Julie Rikelman to the First Circuit Court of Appeals

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

We are members of the Alaska Bar writing in strong support of Julie Rikelman's confirmation by the Senate to the First Circuit Court of Appeals. We come from varying professional backgrounds and positions. We include lawyers who have worked in both public and private practice, prosecutors, defenders, academics, and former judges. Some have been her colleagues and some her litigation adversaries. Those of us who held government positions were appointed by or worked for both Republicans and Democrats. We hold a variety of political perspectives. What we share is a strong belief that Ms. Rikelman is a lawyer of uncommon talent and ability, broad experience, sound and fair-minded judgment, and unquestioned integrity. We are confident that she would serve the federal bench with honor and distinction, and we urge that she be confirmed.

Ms. Rikelman's academic credentials and substantial trial and appellate experience reflect her intelligence, judgment, values, and commitment to the law. After graduating magna cum laude from Harvard College and cum laude from Harvard Law School, she clerked for two highly respected jurists: Chief Justice Dana Fabe of the Alaska Supreme Court and Judge Morton I. Greenberg of the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. After successful stints in private practice with a small litigation firm in Alaska and a large firm in New York, and a period working in-house for a large media corporation, she dedicated herself to litigating issues of reproductive rights. In the ensuing years, she ably took on some of the most significant and difficult legal issues our courts have had to resolve, twice arguing before the U.S. Supreme Court in landmark cases.

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
September 8, 2022
Page 2

We first became familiar with Ms. Rikelman’s work during her time clerking for the Alaska Supreme Court and practicing law in Alaska. Ms. Rikelman’s legal work always was carefully crafted. She is a gifted writer, and her briefs and legal memoranda were clear, complete, thoughtfully focused, and persuasively argued. She also was hardworking, efficient, well-organized, and always met her deadlines.

As a law clerk and advocate, Ms. Rikelman was mindful of the limitations imposed on the judiciary: Most cases must be resolved by applying controlling precedent, regardless of the policy preferences of the litigants or the private personal views of the judges. Ms. Rikelman has a deep dedication to her professional responsibilities and the rule of law. She understands that the law is not just abstract principles and rules, but at its core is about the individuals and organizations whose rights, liberties, property, and lives are at stake.

We have a high level of confidence in Ms. Rikelman’s capacity to be objective and fair to all parties. During her time in Alaska, Ms. Rikelman had occasion, like many lawyers, to represent clients whose positions, claims, or defenses did not always align with her personal views. She always put her personal views aside and ably fulfilled her professional responsibilities, employing the best traits of the legal profession: finely honed legal arguments, dedication to client interests, sound judgment, and universal civility toward courts, clients, colleagues, and adversaries. We have no doubt that she would display the same skills and qualities as a jurist.

We also can confirm that Ms. Rikelman’s ethical compass is finely tuned. During her time in Alaska, she was one of those lawyers whose credibility – both with the judges that she appeared before and with other members of the bar – was high and never questioned. Her word was her bond and she earned the respect of her professional colleagues, judges, court staff, and opposing counsel.

Beyond her academic, intellectual, and professional qualifications, Ms. Rikelman is an uncommonly civil, decent, thoughtful, and kind person. She has an appealing modesty. She pursues her work and her life without displays of ego or self-promotion, and typically without even taking conspicuous credit or seeking recognition. She treats everyone she encounters with courtesy and respect. She listens carefully – a quality that is less common in lawyers and judges than it should be – and she thinks hard about issues. We believe that, as a judge, she would display these same character traits and be driven by one, and only one, consideration: Applying the law faithfully and carefully to find the right answer or outcome to an issue or case.

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
September 8, 2022
Page 3

For all these reasons, we believe that Ms. Rikelman would make an exceptional addition to the federal bench and would serve the First Circuit Court of Appeals with distinction. We urge her confirmation for this important position.

Very truly yours,

Jeffrey M. Feldman
Professor from Practice
University of Washington School of Law

Robert L. Eastaugh
Senior Justice, Alaska Supreme Court

Fran Ulmer
Former Lt. Governor, State of Alaska

Jahna M. Lindemuth
Cashion Gilmore & Lindemuth
Former Attorney General State of Alaska

David R. Mannheimer
Retired Chief Judge, Alaska Court of Appeals

Susan Orlansky
Of Counsel
Reeves Amodio LLC

Nancy R. Gordon
Former Civil Division Statewide Office Chief
State of Alaska Department of Law

Eric T. Sanders
Retired Alaska Superior Court Judge

R. Scott Taylor
Former Senior Assistant Attorney General
State of Alaska

Phillip R. Volland
Retired Alaska Superior Court Judge

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
The Honorable Chares E. Grassley
September 1, 2022
Page 4

Ruth Botstein
*Former Senior Assistant Attorney General
State of Alaska*

Karen Loeffler
Former U.S. Attorney for the District of Alaska

Cammy Oeschli Taylor
*Former state attorney and chair of the Alaska
Oil and Gas Conservation Commission*

John Suddock
Retired Alaska Superior Court Judge

Lloyd Miller
Sonosky Chambers Sachse Miller & Monkman

Bill Evans
Sedor Wendlandt Evans & Filippi

Jennifer Wagner
Seaver & Wagner

Stephan H. Williams
Attorney at Law

John Cashion
Cashion Gilmore & Lindemuth

Mauri Long
Dillon & Findley (Retired)

Timothy Wagner
Seaver & Wagner

James N. Reeves
Holmes Weddle & Barcott

Jeffrey J. Jarvi
Attorney at Law