

**BIPARTISAN LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM 76 FORMER U.S. ATTORNEYS
ON BEHALF OF U.S. ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY GENERAL NOMINEE VANITA GUPTA**

March 2, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Letter in Support of Vanita Gupta, nominee for United States Associate Attorney General

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

As former United States Attorneys of both parties in federal districts across the country, we write in unqualified support of Vanita Gupta, whom President Biden has nominated to serve as Associate Attorney General. Ms. Gupta is an outstanding nominee for that position.

Many of us observed firsthand Ms. Gupta's independence, integrity, and excellent judgment when she served as the head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. In that position, she worked hand-in-hand with U.S. Attorney's Offices to protect vulnerable members of our communities by prosecuting those who committed hate crimes, human trafficking, and other violations of our civil rights laws. Working collaboratively with those same federal prosecutors, as well as elected and appointed state and local officials, she also led critical efforts to reform our criminal justice system. And supervising eleven different litigation sections, she oversaw hundreds of matters in which the Department of Justice sought to advance the rule of law on behalf of those in marginalized communities by fighting discrimination in education, housing, lending, and employment.

Ms. Gupta also forged and maintained strong relationships among the Department of Justice, state and local law enforcement leaders, and those in the civil rights community. She met and spoke frequently and regularly with elected and appointed officials throughout the country, always seeking -- through respectful and honest dialogue -- to respond to the needs and difficulties of local communities. In all of those efforts, she was a valuable partner and supporter of the U.S. Attorneys whose primary responsibility as the chief federal law enforcement officers in our respective districts was to work with our state and local counterparts to protect public safety.

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In short, Ms. Gupta's tenure as head of the Civil Rights Division confirmed her skill as a consensus builder who successfully promoted the cause of justice with nuance and sensitivity. She displayed that same skillful approach during her earlier tenure as the Director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Center for Justice. In that role, Ms. Gupta established coalitions among advocates on both ends of the political spectrum, for which conservatives praised her as "good to work with," having played a "strong role in the left-right cooperation in criminal justice issues." That record, of meaningful and constructive collaboration exemplifies her spectacular qualifications to serve as the Associate Attorney General and to oversee the work of the Civil Rights Division, as well as other DOJ components such as the Office of Justice Programs, the COPS Office, the Office of Violence Against Women, and the Community Relations Service.

The duties of the Associate Attorney General, of course, also include overseeing and coordinating much of the Department's broad affirmative and defensive civil, tax, and environmental litigation. Here, too, Ms. Gupta has an excellent background beyond her previous leadership of the Civil Rights Division's litigation. Indeed, Ms. Gupta has deep experience as a seasoned and talented litigator herself, having overseen legal strategy at the ACLU's criminal justice reform section and having served personally as lead counsel on a wide range of matters. Her success includes, for example, a case representing immigrant children detained under horrific conditions in the privately-run T.Don Hutto detention center in Taylor, Texas. In that litigation, Ms. Gupta skillfully negotiated a landmark settlement mandating the improvement of the facility's inhumane conditions and securing the release of 26 children and their parents. She also oversaw litigation in her role at the ACLU to end HIV-segregation in Alabama and South Carolina prisons, and directed the organization's prisoners' rights and capital punishment litigation docket. Similarly, while serving as lead counsel earlier in her career at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Ms. Gupta brilliantly directed the effort to obtain post-conviction relief for 38 defendants wrongfully convicted in a discriminatory drug sting. As a result of that case, Governor Rick Perry of Texas granted pardons to all of Ms. Gupta's clients after a two-year effort. In all of that work, she justifiably earned a reputation as a shrewd and incisive advocate, with a sharp eye, a quick mind, and a knack for shaping a successful strategy and employing the right tactics to achieve the right and fair result.

Finally, her most recent position as the President and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights has cemented her skills and reputation as a manager and consensus builder. Since its founding in 1950, the Leadership Conference has grown into a coalition of more than 200 national organizations with broad goals, varying views, and different missions. For the last three years, Ms. Gupta has led this diverse coalition (and the Leadership Conference's highly respected staff of 80+) masterfully, with a deft hand, keen judgment, and unshakable dedication to the member organizations' shared dedication to the rule of law. She also has continued to forge relationships with diverse stakeholders across the political spectrum, including her enterprising work on the bipartisan Council on Criminal Justice, the cross-partisan National Task Force on Election Crises, and those wrestling with hate, violence, and disinformation on social media platforms.

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In short, as former United States Attorneys, we were thoroughly heartened when the President nominated Ms. Gupta to the third-ranking position in the Department of Justice. Each of us fully appreciates the Department's power and the scope and breadth of its authority. We all also understand how critical it is that those who lead the Department -- who are the stewards of its mission -- have an unshakable commitment to its independence and its integrity. We know Ms. Gupta to be a lawyer and public servant who shares those values: she has devoted her professional and personal life to supporting and defending the Constitution and those it protects. The country can count on her to lead with passion, conviction, humility, and without political influence.

We support Vanita Gupta's nomination to serve as Associate Attorney General without reservation, and we respectfully urge her speedy confirmation.

Very truly Yours,

A. Lee Bentley, III
Middle District of Florida, 2013-2017

Greg Brower
District of Nevada, 2008-2009

Donald Cazayoux
Middle District of Louisiana, 2010-2013

Sanford C. Coats
Western District of Oklahoma, 2009-2016

Tristram Coffin
District of Vermont, 2009-2015

Vincent H. Cohen Jr.
District of Columbia, 2015

Kelly T. Currie
Eastern District of New York, 2014-2016

Deirdre Daly
District of Connecticut, 2013-2017

Gregory Davis
Southern District of Mississippi, 2012-2017

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Thomas E. Delahanty II
District of Maine, 1980-1981, 2010-2017

Steven Dettelbach
Northern District of Ohio, 2009-2016

Conner Eldridge
Western District of Arkansas, 2010-2015

Zachary Fardon
Northern District of Illinois, 2013-2017

Wifredo (Willy) Ferrer
Southern District of Florida, 2010-2017

Stephanie Finley
Western District of Louisiana, 2010-2017

Paul J. Fishman
District of New Jersey, 2009-2017

John Fishwick
Western District of Virginia, 2015-2017

Deborah R. Gilg
District of Nebraska, 2009-2017

Benjamin Glassman
Southern District of Ohio, 2016-2019

Booth Goodwin
Southern District of West Virginia, 2010-2015

Walt Green
Middle District of Louisiana, 2014-2017

Barry Grissom
District of Kansas, 2010-2016

Melinda Haag
Northern District of California, 2010-2015

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Richard S. Hartunian
Northern District of New York, 2010-2017

Kerry B. Harvey
Eastern District of Kentucky, 2010-2017

Timothy Heaphy
Western District of Virginia, 2009-2014

William Ihlenfeld
Northern District of West Virginia, 2010-2016

Marcos Daniel Jimenez
Southern District of Florida, 2002-2005

Brendan Johnson
District of South Dakota, 2009-2015

B. Todd Jones
District of Minnesota, 1998-2001; 2009-2013

William C. Killian
Eastern District of Tennessee, 2010-2015

Nick Klinefeldt
Southern District of Iowa, 2009-2015

James Lewis
Central District of Illinois, 2010-2016

Karen Loeffler
District of Alaska, 2009-2017

Neil MacBride
Eastern District of Virginia, 2009-2013

Ronald C. Machen
District of Columbia, 2010-2015

Kennith Magidson

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Southern District of Texas, 2011-2017

Pamela C. Marsh

Northern District of Florida, 2010-2015

Jerry Martin

Middle District of Tennessee, 2010-2015

Damon P. Martinez

District of New Mexico, 2014-2017

Barbara McQuade

Eastern District of Michigan, 2010-2017

Zane David Memeger

Eastern District of Pennsylvania, 2010-2016

Michael J. Moore

Middle District of Georgia, 2010-2015

Patrick Miles

Western District of Michigan, 2012-2017

Eric Miller

District of Vermont, 2015-2017

Jan Paul Miller

Central District of Illinois, 2002-2005

Florence Nakakuni

District of Hawaii, 2009-2017

Peter F. Neronha

District of Rhode Island, 2009-2017

Bill Nettles

District of South Carolina, 2010-2016

Wendy Olson

District of Idaho, 2010-2017

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Carmen M. Ortiz
District of Massachusetts, 2009-2017

Channing D. Phillips
District of Columbia, 2015-2017

Timothy Q. Purdon
District of North Dakota, 2010-2015

Ripley Rand
Middle District of North Carolina, 2011-2017

Carole Rendon
Northern District of Ohio, 2016-2017

Emily Gray Rice
District of New Hampshire, 2016-2017

David Rivera
Middle District of Tennessee, 2013-2017

Sarah Saldaña
Northern District of Texas, 2011-2014

Randy Seiler
District of South Dakota, 2015-2017

Jeffrey Sloman
Southern District of Florida, 2009-2010

Edward L. Stanton III
U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Tennessee, 2010-2017

Carter Stewart
Southern District of Ohio, 2009-2016

Brian Stretch
Northern District of California, 2016-2018

Kevin W. Techau
Northern District of Iowa, 2014-2017

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Anne Tompkins
Western District of North Carolina, 2010-2015

Robert C. Troyer
District of Colorado, 2016-2018

Joyce White Vance
Northern District of Alabama, 2009-2017

John W. Vaudreuil
Western District of Wisconsin, 2010-2017

Benjamin B. Wagner
Eastern District of California, 2009-2016

Ken Wainstein
District of Columbia, 2004-2006

Thomas Walker
Eastern District of North Carolina, 2011-2016

John Walsh
District of Colorado, 2010-2016

William F. Weld
District of Massachusetts, 1981-1986
Governor, Massachusetts, 1991-1997

Danny C. Williams, Sr.
Northern District of Oklahoma, 2012-2017

Sally Yates
Deputy Attorney General, 2015-2017
Northern District of Georgia, 2008-2015

Stephanie Yonekura
Central District of California, 2014-2015