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December 19, 2008

Chairman Patrick Leahy
U.S. Senate
433 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-4502

Ranking Member Arlen Specter
U.S. Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3802

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Specter:

I write in support of the nomination of Eric Holder to the position of Attorney General of the United States.

I had extensive dealings with Mr. Holder when my colleagues and I represented the Macedonia Baptist Church in a civil suit against the Christian Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1990s in South Carolina state court. Three Klan foot soldiers had been arrested and sentenced to federal prison for their part in the arson of Macedonia and another church. But the Klan and its South Carolina leader had not been brought to justice. Through our civil case, we hoped to seize the group's headquarters, put it out of business, and send a message to others who might burn places of worship.

To prevail against the Klan leader and his group, we needed to prove that he lent substantial aid and assistance to the three imprisoned men who burned Macedonia. To accomplish this objective, it was essential that the three Klan members be brought from federal prisons scattered across the nation to provide live testimony. There is no standard procedure to obtain live testimony from federal inmates in state civil trials. Usually, the only option is to depose inmates and present their deposition testimony. But a pretrial deposition rarely has as much impact on a jury as does live testimony. Also, a pretrial deposition does not allow for effective cross-examination based on unanticipated evidence from trial witnesses.

I contacted then-Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder for assistance in getting the three federal inmates to the courtroom. He promptly got the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the U.S. Marshals Service to transport them to Clarendon County, South Carolina, for our civil trial. In doing so, he demonstrated an extraordinary concern for the victims of hate crimes.

Based in large part on the testimony of the three Klansmen, the jury returned a \$37.5 million verdict, later reduced to \$21.5 million, against the Klan and its South

Carolina leader. As a result of the verdict, we seized the group's headquarters, and the Christian Knights dissolved. Without Mr. Holder's assistance, neither the verdict nor the message it sent—a message about the sanctity of places of worship in our country—would have been possible.

I urge you to move promptly to confirm Mr. Holder.

Please call if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Morris Dees". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Morris Dees
Founder and Chief Trial Counsel

cc: Eric Holder