



PRESIDENT
RAKIM BROOKS

CHAIR
PAULETTE MEYER

January 20, 2023

The Honorable Richard Durbin
Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee

Dear Chairman Durbin:

On behalf of the Alliance for Justice (AFJ), a national association representing over 150 public interest and civil rights organizations, I write to support the confirmation of Judge Charnelle Bjelkengren to the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Washington.

Throughout her career as a dedicated public servant, Judge Bjelkengren has worked extensively with state agencies and institutions, building a strong repertoire of administrative knowledge. She began her career as an Assistant Attorney General in the Washington State Office of the Attorney General in Spokane where she represented the Department of Licensing, the Employment Security Department, and the Department of Social and Health Services. From 2004 to 2013, Judge Bjelkengren was assigned to the Administrative Law Division and, as a judicial review coordinator in that division, she handled settlements, reviewed and edited briefs, and advised, mentored, and educated Assistant Attorney Generals across Washington state. As a result, she is deeply familiar with the issues impacting the Eastern District of Washington. After spending nearly fifteen years working as an attorney for the state, Judge Bjelkengren became an administrative law judge for the Washington State Office of Administrative Hearings in 2013.

Judge Bjelkengren's dedication to public service, her reputation as a skilled attorney, and her experience as an administrative law judge garnered her statewide recognition. As a result, when a vacancy opened on the Spokane County Superior Court, Governor Jay Inslee appointed her to the bench. This elevation made Judge Bjelkengren the first Black woman judge in Eastern Washington. Her experience presiding over hearings as both an administrative judge and a superior court judge makes her especially qualified for the federal bench, where her skills and knowledge regarding a wide range of legal subjects will serve her well.

Out of the courtroom, Judge Bjelkengren maintains close ties to her community in Washington. She is a member of the Washington State Superior Court Judges' Association where she serves on the Equality and Fairness Committee. Judge Bjelkengren is a member of the Spokane Chapter of the NAACP and a member of the Spokane Valley Kiwanis Club, which is a service organization founded to assist children in need.

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Judge Bjelkengren has dedicated her legal career to public service as an Assistant Attorney General, an administrative law judge, and a superior court judge. She is a seasoned judge with experience in administrative, criminal, and civil matters and has deep ties to the Eastern District of Washington. Notably, if confirmed, Judge Bjelkengren would be the first woman of color to serve on the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Washington as well as the first Black woman to serve on a federal District Court in the state of Washington. For all of the reasons stated above, I urge you to confirm Judge Bjelkengren to the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Washington.

Sincerely,

Rakim H.D. Brooks

Rakim Brooks
President, Alliance for Justice