



PRESIDENT
RAKIM BROOKS

CHAIR
PAULETTE MEYER

May 9, 2022

The Honorable Richard Durbin
Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee

Dear Chairman Durbin:

On behalf of the Alliance for Justice (AFJ), a national association representing more than 130 public interest and civil rights organizations, I write to support the confirmation of John Z. Lee to the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

With extensive experience as a litigator in both the public sector and private practice, and a decade of experience as a federal trial court judge, Judge Lee is well qualified to join the Seventh Circuit. A double Harvard graduate, Judge Lee began his career as a trial attorney in the Environmental and Natural Resources Division of the Department of Justice, litigating cases arising under federal environmental statutes in the Third, Seventh, and Ninth Circuits. He returned to his native Chicago to work in private practice, eventually joining Freeborn & Peters LLP and becoming partner within two years. While in private practice, Judge Lee represented a wide range of plaintiffs and defendants, from large multinational corporations to small business and individuals, in complex commercial disputes. He also evinced a commitment to equal justice through his substantial *pro bono* practice. For example, he represented a forklift operator alleging age discrimination in violation of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act and a disabled individual suing a condominium association for violations of the Fair Housing Act.

In 2011, Judge Lee was nominated to serve as a judge on the U.S. District Court Judge for the Northern District of Illinois, ultimately being confirmed in May 2012 by unanimous voice vote of the U.S. Senate. Since joining the court, Judge Lee has issued more than 800 opinions and has been reversed by a reviewing court only 11 times. His rulings on complex civil and criminal matters reflect an impartial jurist with a strong commitment to equal justice. While sitting by designation on the Seventh Circuit, Judge Lee issued a noteworthy dissent finding that incarcerated individuals have an expectation of privacy to be free from strip searches. On the district court, he protected the rights of workers to organize and oversaw a \$70 million-dollar concussion settlement between thousands of student-athletes and the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

Outside of the courtroom, Judge Lee has been active in serving the greater Chicago community and particularly providing legal services to disadvantaged and indigent clients. He previously served on the Board of Directors and as President of the Coordinated Advice and Referral Program for Legal Services (CARPLS), a

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legal services “hotline” that assists more than 50,000 low-income clients a year in Cook County, Illinois. He also co-founded the Willow Creek Legal Aid Clinic, which provides free legal services to low-income individuals in Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Additionally, Judge Lee has worked to address various issues affecting Asian Americans in the legal profession as a member of the Asian American Bar Association (AABA) of Greater Chicago and the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA).

The son of Korean immigrants, Judge Lee would be the first Asian American to sit on the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. His confirmation would bring critical demographic diversity to an appellate bench that currently does not reflect the diversity of our nation. Given his qualifications, the Senate should swiftly confirm Judge Lee to the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rakim Brooks". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Rakim Brooks
President, Alliance for Justice