



PRESIDENT
RAKIM BROOKS

CHAIR
PAULETTE MEYER

May 10, 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 Judge Salvador Mendoza Jr. to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Judge Mendoza's near-decade of judicial service, his exemplary legal career, and his lived experience make him an exceptional candidate for the Ninth Circuit. Judge Mendoza served as a judge *pro tempore*, or temporary judge, for years before Washington state governor Jay Inslee appointed him to the Superior Court for Benton and Washington Counties in 2013. Just one year later, President Barack Obama nominated Judge Mendoza to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington. He was confirmed shortly thereafter, receiving overwhelming [bipartisan](#) support in the U.S. Senate with a 92-4 vote. Since his elevation to the federal bench, Judge Mendoza's rulings reflect a jurist with a clear commitment to equal justice under law. He has [enforced](#) key environmental laws, [applied](#) critical worker protections, helped families [hold](#) government officials accountable for misconduct, and [ensured](#) that consumers and patients [received](#) the legal protections they were entitled to.

Prior to his judicial service, Judge Mendoza worked primarily as a criminal defense lawyer. After working for two years as a prosecutor, Judge Mendoza changed his focus to criminal defense. For a decade-and-a-half, first as a solo practitioner and later as president of a small firm, he represented both private clients and those who could not afford an attorney in criminal court. Maintaining a robust caseload of 150 to 250 criminal cases per year, Judge Mendoza litigated a wide range of felony, misdemeanor, and juvenile matters. He was also involved in the local courts system, helping create the first drug court for juvenile offenders in his community; drug courts serve as a critical alternative to traditional courts for individuals with substance abuse issues who need treatment. Criminal defense is a bedrock of our legal and constitutional system; Judge Mendoza's criminal law experience, including representing the most vulnerable, would enhance the Ninth Circuit.

The son of Mexican immigrants who grew up in a family of farmworkers, Judge Mendoza moved to the Yakima Valley of Washington as a child. He was the first ever Latino judge to serve on the Eastern District of Washington and would also be the first Latino judge to sit on the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth

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Circuit from Washington state. The Ninth Circuit, Washington state, and Eastern Washington all have substantial Latinx communities: Washington state is [13.4%](#) Latinx and Yakima County is more than [50%](#) Latinx. Judge Mendoza's confirmation would bring the Ninth Circuit one step closer to reflecting the communities it serves.

Given his exemplary qualifications, described in greater detail in our [linked](#) report, the Senate should expeditiously confirm Judge Salvador Mendoza to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Sincerely,

Rakim A.D. Brooks

Rakim Brooks
President, Alliance for Justice