

October 13, 2020

The Honorable A. Mitchell McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
290 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators:

My relationship with Amy Coney Barrett spans 20 years. My late husband, John Copeland Nagle, and I have known Amy as a colleague at the Notre Dame Law School, dear friend, and fellow Christian. Amy is a true scholar of the Constitution, a friend who is other-focused, a balanced feminist and a devout person of faith who would make an exceptional Supreme Court Justice.

My husband and I met Amy nearly 20 years ago just before she joined the faculty of the Notre Dame Law School. John became a close friend and co-author with Amy during their years teaching at the Notre Dame Law School. Together, Amy and John co-wrote the article “Congressional Originalism” that was published in the University of Pennsylvania Journal of Constitutional Law in 2016.

My husband passed away last year, in 2019, after a planned heart surgery went terribly awry. As a close friend and someone who knew John both professionally and personally, I asked Amy to speak at John’s memorial service. Her words spoke hope and comfort to my family at a particularly devastating time in our family’s history. Amy has been a friend to me in the truest sense—during some of the hardest times of my life she has shown up and offered words of love and care to me. When Amy spoke of John’s legacy and faith at his memorial service, I knew that she really understood our sorrow and loss as well as what John had contributed to the field of environmental law and to the lives of his students. In fact, the entire Barrett family supported us through the drawings given to us by her children, meals cooked for us, offers to cut our lawn, walks together, shared tears and deep prayers for one another.

I think all of us—all Americans—live our best lives in community, when we share meals together, our joys, our sorrows, our presence. We need one another for support and accountability. Amy lives out that deep sense of care, compassion, mercy, grace, support and accountability among her family, friends, colleagues and students. I have seen Amy grieve

deeply for the poor and for those who have lost much. She will be a Supreme Court Justice who understands and cares about the challenges our country is facing now.

Amy and I share common characteristics of balancing family and professional lives. It's true that women or men cannot "do it all" or "have it all" in both career and family without sacrifice—and help. Like Amy and her husband, Jesse, my husband and I shared family responsibilities and supported each other through life's many seasons. When my career took me to China several times a year, John would shift to high gear to care for our children. There are many stories among his colleagues about the times he brought our daughters to the law school to help arrange their hair bows before dance classes. At other times, I stayed at home with our children and my husband focused on teaching and writing. Today, our adult daughters thank us for the examples of work and family life for them.

I have seen this practice with Amy and Jesse Barrett as they have served together to love and care for their seven children. They are selfless in their attitude and commitment toward one another. They love each other. They support each other. Out of that deep marital love they want the best for each other, which overflows to the children. I have watched early on when Amy took on more responsibilities of school carpools, classroom volunteer service and field trips with the kids. Then, over the years, Jesse took on the larger role of childcare when Amy's work caused her to travel more.

Isn't that the truest form of feminism? Indeed, it mirrors the love and support that Justice Ginsburg and her husband famously shared. Couples around the country are working out what it means to be career-minded professionals and loving mothers and fathers. These Americans, like Jesse and Amy, realize that in families, couples can—and should—take turns leaning in for career and leaning out for families. Feminist husbands should not be afraid to let their wives grab the brass ring, even if it means they need to do more at home. In this sense, I believe that Jesse and Amy are true feminists and that the men and women of America have much to admire about them.

And what about our young girls? What is more feminist than looking at an icon like Amy Coney Barrett—and realizing that with a supportive community and sacrifice you can have it all: a loving marriage, large family, flourishing career—and a greater call to public service? I know that she will be a great example to my two daughters who are just beginning their careers—and so, too, I hope for yours.

Many individuals are talking about Amy Coney Barrett's faith as a Catholic. I am a Protestant and Amy is Catholic, yet throughout our 20-year friendship I don't ever remember a time when our faith traditions kept us apart or drew any debate. We have a common Christian faith, the same faith that is shared by millions of Americans. It is a call to love God and each other, and to serve those who need our help. That drive to help others is reflected in Amy's current service as a judge and soon as a Supreme Court Justice. It is also evident through her decision to love and care for her large family of seven children including two children adopted from Haiti and one who has Down's syndrome. At a time when adoption and multi-ethnic families are increasingly common in our country, it is surprising that this aspect of Amy's family is under assault in the

media. I would hope that we are all bigger than that, as we welcome diverse families like Amy's into our hearts, homes and communities.

My family has walked alongside Amy's family for nearly 20 years—through the birth and adoption of children. We have celebrated joyful events together and upheld each other during times of a deep grief. Amy's friendship is one that I cherish.

As a friend, I am thrilled that Amy has been chosen to serve on the Supreme Court and know that my late husband would feel the same. She is principled, disciplined, and devoted to the law and the Constitution. As a citizen like you, I want our President to nominate—and our Senators to confirm—highly qualified, principled Supreme Court Justices who will uphold the Constitution as they consider and decide on some of the most challenging cases in our nation.

Amy Coney Barrett is the real deal. She is an incredible woman, and she will be an outstanding Supreme Court Justice. I am excited for millions of other Americans to tune into her confirmation hearings this week to hear directly from a working mom who could become our nation's very first female Supreme Court Justice with school-aged children.

Let's lean in—together.

Sincerely,

Lisa Nagle