

January 27, 2015

Senator Charles Grassley
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Nomination of Loretta Lynch for United States Attorney General

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Leahy:

On behalf of the NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc. (“LDF”), I write to strongly support the nomination of Loretta Lynch to serve as the 83rd Attorney General of the United States.

First, we must note the historic significance of Ms. Lynch’s appointment. If confirmed, Loretta Lynch would be our nation’s first African-American female—and only the second African American ever—to serve as Attorney General. In a country where African Americans were relegated by law to second-class status only a generation ago, this is a remarkable accomplishment to celebrate.

Loretta Lynch is an extraordinary candidate to lead the Justice Department at this moment in time. Growing up in North Carolina amidst the civil rights struggles of the 1960s has provided her with a unique perspective of the challenges facing our country in fulfilling our democratic ideals and of the vital role our federal government plays in ensuring equal justice for all. Indeed, no other prior nominee for Attorney General was told by her mother at an early age that she “picked cotton so [her daughter] wouldn’t have to do the same thing.” Ms. Lynch has impeccable academic and professional credentials and would bring strong leadership and management skills to the position. Importantly, she has devoted most of her illustrious legal career to enforcing federal laws on behalf of the United States and has amassed a widely praised record of even-handed enforcement under both civil and criminal statutes. She is intimately familiar with all facets of the Department which she would now lead.

The Justice Department serves as our nation’s guardian of the rule of law and chief proponent of equal opportunity for all. Currently, the Department faces significant challenges across a wide range of issues, including civil rights. As we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the

Voting Rights Act, the Department's longstanding enforcement of federal civil rights laws has come to the fore once more, from its momentous role in Selma to its critical enforcement activities today. The leader of the Department at this important time must be committed to defending the rights of all Americans, maintaining the progress we have achieved in civil rights, and acting independently of partisan or political pressure.

For nearly six decades, LDF has worked alongside the Justice Department and the Civil Rights Division, its "crown jewel," to ensure that our nation lives up to its promise of equality for everyone. Indeed, the Civil Rights Division has often provided the best hope to racial and ethnic minorities in the quest for equal justice. The Division was formed soon after the Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Its courageous and aggressive enforcement of the new civil rights statutes passed in the 1950s and 1960s opened countless doors for African Americans and other racial minorities. While national civil rights organizations such as LDF bring a number of civil rights cases themselves, the Civil Rights Division is the principal enforcer of our nation's civil rights laws in light of its capacity, staff and resources.

Over the last six years, Attorney General Holder has led the Justice Department with remarkable vision and courage. In the field of civil rights, his dedication, strategic focus, and commitment have been outstanding and unrivaled. From the beginning, General Holder had a vision of restoring and transforming the Civil Rights Division across a variety of pressing legal areas, including criminal justice reform, voting rights, predatory lending, and legal services for the impoverished. In particular, the Attorney General has been forceful and courageous in his willingness to speak candidly about the problem of mass incarceration. He launched a groundbreaking new "Smart on Crime" initiative to curb the harsh and often discriminatory effects of federal sentencing practices, expand the availability of alternatives to incarceration, address the root causes of recidivism, and expand the availability of re-entry services. In recent months, after tragic incidents rocked Ferguson, Missouri and Staten Island, New York, General Holder was personally and powerfully involved in the federal response to the unacceptable use of excessive force by police against the communities they serve. Finally, General Holder's leadership and tenacity in the realm of voting rights has been unmatched. In 2013, when the Supreme Court invalidated central parts of the Voting Rights Act in a damaging decision, Attorney General Holder promptly deployed the full litigation strength of the Department to places like North Carolina and Texas to protect voters of color who had been made even more susceptible to voting discrimination. His Justice Department attorneys stood alongside LDF lawyers to challenge Texas' discriminatory photo ID law and ultimately prevailed—with a federal judge finding that the state had intentionally discriminated and violated the United States Constitution.

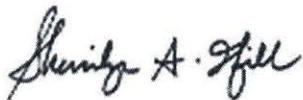
Attorney General Holder leaves a remarkable legacy that would be difficult for anyone to follow. But if any candidate is able to do so, it would be Loretta Lynch. Ms. Lynch has all the requisite qualities and talents to excel tremendously at the job. After graduating from Harvard University and Harvard Law School, Ms. Lynch worked her way up through the ranks of the United States Attorney's Office. She started her career in the Eastern District of New York, prosecuting violent crime and narcotics cases, and was promoted to Deputy Chief of General Crimes and Chief of Intake and Arraignments, and later to Chief of the

Long Island Office. Subsequently, she was nominated and confirmed to serve as the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York under two administrations. She successfully brought major cases in the areas of human trafficking, child abuse and exploitation, counterterrorism, cybercrime, mortgage and financial fraud, corporate misconduct, and public corruption. Ms. Lynch also served as a member of the board of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and as a partner at a major national law firm.

Ms. Lynch is known for her perseverance and adherence to the rule of law. She has earned the respect of a bipartisan array of lawyers, law enforcement organizations, and civil rights groups. As the United States Attorney, she prosecuted brutal hate crimes, including the firebombing of mosques and Hindu temples, and reached a comprehensive settlement with a Long Island police department to improve their handling of violent hate crimes against Latinos. Ms. Lynch also served pro bono as Special Counsel to the Office of the Prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, where she investigated human rights violations. Additionally, she has been recognized for the successful prosecution of police brutality and misconduct, including the infamous case of police abuse against Abner Louima in 2000.

While it is hard to overstate the positive impact of General Holder's tenure, we are confident that, if confirmed, Ms. Lynch will advance his proud legacy. Doing so will require that she continue the work of reforming federal criminal sentencing to reflect a concern with rehabilitation, re-entry, and the reduction of American's over-reliance on incarceration. It also means working to reform policing through incentives of financial support and litigation, which improve police-community relations and eradicate the taint of bias in policing. Finally, Ms. Lynch should deploy the Justice Department's resources to ensure that every American's right to vote is fully protected. At this momentous time for the Department of Justice and for the quest for racial justice in our society, it is imperative that the Department is led by someone with a steadfast commitment to equal justice under the law. We believe Loretta Lynch is uniquely suited to assume this critical role. We look forward to continuing to work alongside the Department under Ms. Lynch's leadership in the years to come.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sherrilyn A. Ifill".

Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.