



New Mexico CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

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The Honorable Dick Durbin, Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chair Durbin,

It is with great honor that the New Mexico Criminal Defense Lawyers Association submits this letter in support of the nomination of Margaret Strickland for the federal bench for the District of New Mexico. The New Mexico Criminal Defense Lawyers (NMCDLA) is an association of over 500 legal professionals consisting of public defense attorneys, private criminal defense attorneys, investigators, paralegals, and social workers. As an association, our focus is on helping our members be effective in their representation of those facing criminal prosecution. We strive to achieve our goal through education and training, partnering with diverse coalitions to advocate for a criminal justice system which is fair and effective, and overseeing policy work that safeguards constitutional rights.

It is important to the criminal defense community that the federal bench have well-qualified diverse judges who are tied to the communities in which they serve, approach all areas of work ethically, fairly, and justly, and are committed to constitutional protections. Margaret Strickland is an excellent nominee for the federal bench because she brings to the bench a diverse personal and professional background; has a long-standing commitment to public service; is experienced as a legal advocate in the courtroom and in the community; is aware of the biases and systemic discrimination against certain individuals in the judicial system; and approaches disputes fairly, ethically and with sound legal reasoning.

Ms. Strickland has long been a public servant in the New Mexico legal system, first as a state public defender and later, after going into private practice, as court-appointed counsel for the federal judiciary under the Criminal Justice Act, 18 U.S.C. § 3006A, representing indigent defendants. While in private practice, Ms. Strickland also represented victims of crime and individuals whose civil rights had been violated by excessive force, solitary confinement, failure to protect, and sexual assault. As an attorney in Las Cruces, New Mexico, she worked with

vulnerable populations, including children, immigrants, and indigent persons. In the courtroom, Ms. Strickland is known as an ethical trial attorney protecting constitutional rights, insisting due process protections be met, and demonstrating a mastery of the rules of evidence.

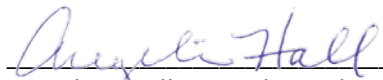
In 2016, Ms. Strickland was elected president of NMCDLA and through her presidency she brought awareness to the biases against people of color and women in the criminal justice system. She also emphasized defender wellness to make sure those working in the legal system maintained good health and wellbeing so that they could continue their hard work and advocacy for others. Throughout her career, she advocated to protect and expand civil liberties for all New Mexicans and helped to educate the public about bail reform and prison conditions. She has testified before the New Mexico Legislature to promote “smart” legislation that aims to end the “revolving door” of the criminal justice system and makes the community safer, is apolitical, is fiscally responsible, and is evidence based.

It is without a doubt that as a federal district court judge, Ms. Strickland will be ethical, fair and just to all those before her, will ensure equal access to the legal system, and will hold firm to ensure constitutional rights of all parties are protected. As such, NMCDLA conveys to you and the Senate Judiciary Committee its highest recommendation for Ms. Strickland.

Sincerely,



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Cc: Members, Senate Judiciary Committee