



June 2, 2021

Senator Richard Durbin, Chair
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Charles Grassley, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Support for Lauren J. King for U.S. District Court Judge

Aaron A. Payment,
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Tribal Chairperson

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Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

On behalf of the *Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians*, it is with great pleasure that I write in support of Lauren J. King's nomination to serve as U.S. District Court Judge for the Western District of Washington.

I have firsthand knowledge of Lauren's competencies and advanced qualifications in Federal Indian Law as she is currently treaty council for my Tribe which is situated in a different judicial district. She has been amazing in tracking complex legal issues and in fairly and judiciously leading our negotiations on behalf of my Tribal Nation which is the largest east of the Mississippi. Her nomination is historic as she is a citizen of the Muscogee Nation and if appointed will become the first Native federal judge in Washington State, and the third sitting Native judge in the nation.

Ms. King is a first-rate attorney with impeccable qualifications for a federal judgeship. She is an experienced litigator with over a decade of experience handling complex federal litigation matters ranging from complex commercial transactions and intellectual property to treaty rights, cultural resources protections, and tribal jurisdiction. In addition, she has served as a pro tem appellate judge for the Northwest Intertribal Court System since 2013 where she has heard appeals on a broad range of subject matter, including commercial disputes, employment matters, and sovereign immunity.

The United States Constitution gives the federal government exclusive authority over Indian affairs, and the federal judiciary is regularly tasked with making decisions that have a lasting impact on day-to-day life in tribal communities. The jurisdictional scheme on Indian lands is painfully complex, and due to the federal enforcement responsibilities under various federal laws and administrative regulations, Native people are parties to federal court proceedings at grossly disproportionate rates to their non-Native counterparts. Despite this fact, few federal judges have ever visited an Indian community or a tribal court, let alone lived or worked in them. We believe that Ms. King's knowledge and experience are vitally important for the federal judiciary.

We are committed to seeing the federal judiciary include individuals who understand the unique legal status of Indian tribes and can approach Indian issues from an informed, unbiased perspective. We hope that the Judiciary Committee will move swiftly to confirm Ms. King. Should you have any questions, please contact me at **906-635-6050** or via email at: aaronpayment@saulttribe.net

Respectfully,

Aaron A. Payment