



# USET

SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND

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June 4, 2021

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

The Honorable Chuck Grassley  
Ranking Member  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley,

We write on behalf of United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) to convey our strong support for Lauren J. King, who has been nominated by President Biden to serve as a federal district judge for the United States District Court for the Western District of Washington. A citizen of the Muscogee Nation, if confirmed, she will be the third active Native American federal district court judge in the country, the fifth in the history of the federal judiciary, and the first Native American federal judge in the Western District of Washington. Her significant legal expertise in combination with her lived experience as a Native American woman prepare her to serve on the federal bench in a way that honors the United States' obligation to support Tribal sovereignty and self-governance.

USET SPF is a non-profit, inter-tribal organization advocating on behalf of thirty-three (33) federally recognized Tribal Nations from the Northeastern Woodlands to the Everglades and across the Gulf of Mexico. <sup>1</sup>USET SPF is dedicated to promoting, protecting, and advancing the inherent sovereign rights and authorities of Tribal Nations and in assisting its membership in dealing effectively with public policy issues.

Ms. King's experience in the legal field includes service as a judge, practitioner, and educator. Importantly, she has dedicated her career to federal Indian law and the protection of Tribal Nation rights. A principal at Foster Garvey, P.C., she chairs the firm's Native American Law Practice Group, while also serving as a pro tem appellate judge for the Northwest Intertribal Court System. Additionally, Ms. King is an appointed Commissioner on the Washington State Gambling Commission. Previously, she was a professor of federal Indian Law at the Seattle University School of Law. This background provides her with a strong understanding and appreciation for U.S. law, particularly as it applies to Tribal Nations and the Tribal-

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<sup>1</sup> USET SPF member Tribal Nations include: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas (TX), Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians (ME), Catawba Indian Nation (SC), Cayuga Nation (NY), Chickahominy Indian Tribe (VA), Chickahominy Indian Tribe—Eastern Division (VA), Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (NC), Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians (ME), Jena Band of Choctaw Indians (LA), Mashantucket Pequot Indian Tribe (CT), Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe (MA), Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida (FL), Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MS), Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut (CT), Monacan Indian Nation (VA), Nansemond Indian Nation (VA), Narragansett Indian Tribe (RI), Oneida Indian Nation (NY), Pamunkey Indian Tribe (VA), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township (ME), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point (ME), Penobscot Indian Nation (ME), Poarch Band of Creek Indians (AL), Rappahannock Tribe (VA), Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (NY), Seminole Tribe of Florida (FL), Seneca Nation of Indians (NY), Shinnecock Indian Nation (NY), Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe (VA) and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) (MA).

*Because there is Strength in Unity*

federal relationship. With 29 federally recognized Tribal Nations served by the Western District of Washington, her expertise will be an asset, as the Court considers matters of Tribal sovereignty and the federal trust obligation.

In addition to her legal credentials, Ms. King carries with her the unique experiences of life as a Muscogee woman in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This provides her with an innate knowledge of Indian Country's history, challenges, and opportunities. Moreover, this nomination sends yet another powerful message to Tribal Nations and Native people—one of regard, honor, affirmation, and visibility. For too long, Native experiences, perspective, understanding, and voices have been largely invisible or fundamentally misrepresented in public discourse—particularly in the federal judiciary. This leads to court opinions and case law that fail to reflect our unique status and, often, are hostile to our interests. If confirmed, Ms. King's presence on the federal bench will both inspire others and result in decisions that reflect the inherent sovereign rights and authorities of Tribal Nations.

USET SPF extends our full support Ms. King's nomination to the United States District Court for the Western District of Washington. We call upon the United States Senate to act swiftly on her confirmation in accordance with its responsibility to honor its obligations to Tribal Nations. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact Ms. Liz Malerba, USET SPF Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs, at [LMalerba@usetinc.org](mailto:LMalerba@usetinc.org) or 615-838-5906.

Sincerely,



Chief Kirk Francis  
President



Kitcki A. Carroll  
Executive Director