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*Promoting Public Interest Law and Pro Bono Service*

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October 24, 2018

Senator Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Filling vacancies in District of Columbia local courts

Dear Senator McConnell:

Washington Council of Lawyers urges the Senate to vote on the pending nominations to fill numerous judicial vacancies on the D.C. Court of Appeals and the Superior Court for the District of Columbia.

Founded in 1971, Washington Council of Lawyers is a non-partisan public-interest bar association that works to encourage pro bono work, train lawyers, and meet legal accessibility needs in the community.

Despite our efforts to increase legal representation for those who cannot afford lawyers, access to justice is delayed—and thus impeded—when there are not enough judges to hear cases promptly. These delays, unfortunately, are affecting justice in the local District of Columbia courts.

There are currently ten judicial vacancies (out of an authorized 61 judgeships) on the D.C. Superior Court, with six nominees awaiting Senate confirmation. These vacancies have affected many divisions in our local courts.

The Family Court, for instance, faces unsustainable caseloads for judges in cases involving child custody, guardianship, child support, abuse and neglect, termination of parental rights, juvenile delinquency, and mental health. These delays cause children to suffer the most.

Other divisions and branches of Superior Court face similar strains. In the Landlord Tenant Branch, eviction cases are heard by two judges in two courtrooms, but expanding caseloads make it nearly impossible for either judge to devote adequate time to individual litigants and their cases. And because there are so many vacancies, the court is unable to assign more judges to hear these cases, which determine whether a tenant can stay in his or her home.

Finally, the D.C. Court of Appeals has two vacancies, and these vacancies cause delays in the Court resolving appellate cases and providing guidance to litigants and lower-court judges.

Without a full set of judges, D.C. Courts cannot effectively and equitably offer justice to D.C. citizens. We urge the Senate to confirm the District's judicial nominees as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Steib". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

David Steib  
President, Washington Council of Lawyers