

May 8, 2017

Senator Debbie Stabenow  
731 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-2204

Senator Gary Peters  
724 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Stabenow and Peters:

As longtime colleagues of Justice Joan Larsen at University of Michigan Law School, we write in our individual capacities to express enthusiastic support of her nomination for a seat on the Sixth Circuit. Justice Larsen is brilliant, principled, and dedicated. Her commitment to the rule of law and her capacity for top-flight legal analysis are both of the first order, and her personal integrity and decency are exceptional. Not all of us share Justice Larsen's views on judicial methodology. But every single one of us agrees that she will be an outstanding federal judge, and we are unanimous in urging you to support her nomination. Our only regret is that she will no longer be able to continue as a Justice on the Michigan Supreme Court, where she has served with distinction.

During the nearly two decades of Justice Larsen's career at Michigan Law, we have gotten to know her well as colleague, intellectual collaborator, and friend. We have seen each of the traits described above in action, not once, but many times.

Even among the talented and ambitious lawyers at an elite law school, Joan stands out for her ability to make the penetrating insight that untangles some knotty problem of statutory interpretation or judicial doctrine. Especially distinctive, moreover, is the rigor and even-handedness she brings to her analysis. For Joan, law is not just an extension of politics; it is a distinct force—both our inheritance and our responsibility—that deserves care, respect, and the most serious attention. It is always a pleasure to see her insist, politely yet firmly, that doctrine is not endlessly malleable and that statutes mean what they say.


For those of us who have found ourselves on the opposite side of a debate with Joan about a case, a statute, or some broader issue of constitutional history, she has demonstrated time and again that she is both a gracious and an intellectually honest partner in the collaborative project of figuring things out. What matters for Joan is not winning, but working out the right answer. Even when you disagree with her, it is impossible not to respect her and to take pleasure in the process of refining the issues actually in dispute. And she comments generously and extensively on our work—even (or especially) work that makes arguments running directly against her own legal instincts. This generosity of spirit, assumption of good faith, and sincerity of engagement is a rare virtue. We suspect it may be her defining quality as a judge.

We have also seen her dedication and collegiality in her teaching and work with students. Each of us who teach the same courses as Joan—whether Constitutional Law, Criminal Procedure, or Legislation and Regulation—have benefitted from her generosity with materials, notes, or conversations. Many of us who teach one of these courses can point to numerous places in our own class notes, class assignments, and syllabi where she has left her fingerprints. Outside the classroom, Joan was a dedicated advisor to students and a tireless advocate for them. She coordinated Michigan’s clerkship placement committee for years, and was known throughout the school for walking students through even the smallest details of their clerkship applications. Those of us tasked with filling her shoes in this capacity—and it’s taken a group of three to even come close—have continued to benefit from her readiness, as a sitting Michigan Supreme Court Justice, to lend advice about both programmatic decisions and individual student dilemmas.

Those of us who have worked with Joan on purely administrative matters have been deeply impressed by her commitment to getting everything right. She showed great, and appropriate, attention to detail, and demonstrated profound commitment to making sure that every student was treated consistently. When students raised complaints or concerns, she showed great patience and real compassion, while nonetheless adhering to a clear standard. To the extent she concluded a change in process was merited, she was rigorous about making sure that it was fairly implemented for all. She will doubtless bring the same even-handedness to bear in her approach to litigants; indeed, she has already exhibited an ideal judicial temperament in her time on the bench.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Any of us would be delighted to speak with you further on her behalf. We urge you to support Justice Larsen’s nomination to the Sixth Circuit.

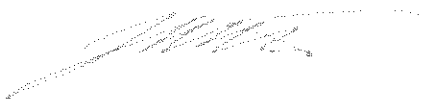
Best regards,




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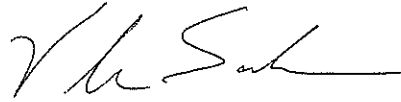
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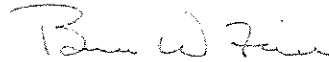
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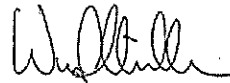
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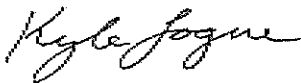
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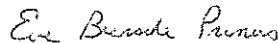
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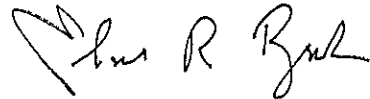
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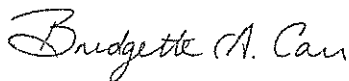
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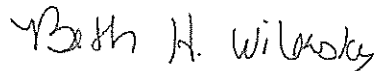
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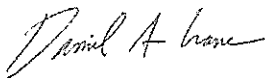
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