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JUDGE CLARENCE THOMAS

RECORD OF PUBLIC SERVICE SPEAKS FOR ITSELF; DON'T POLITICIZE THE CONFIRMATION PROCESS

WASHINGTON - SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER BOB DOLE (R-KS) TODAY MADE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT ON THE NOMINATION OF JUDGE CLARENCE THOMAS TO THE U.S. SUPREME COURT.

AS THE GRANDSON OF A SHARECROPPER IN THE SEGREGATED SOUTH, THE YOUNG CLARENCE THOMAS WAS CONSTANTLY REMINDED THAT THE AMERICAN DREAM WAS A "WHITE MAN'S DREAM" -- NEVER TO BE REALIZED, NEVER TO BE SHARED, BY THOSE AMERICANS WHOSE SKIN HAPPENED TO BE A DIFFERENT COLOR.

DESPITE A CHILDHOOD OF POVERTY AND "JIM CROW," CLARENCE THOMAS REJECTED THE EASY PATH OF RESIGNATION, RELENTLESSLY PURSUING -- INSTEAD -- THE MORE DIFFICULT ROAD OF HARD WORK AND A COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE.

AS AN ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL FOR THE STATE OF MISSOURI, AS CHAIRMAN OF THE EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION, AND, NOW, AS A DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE D.C. COURT OF APPEALS, CLARENCE THOMAS HAS INDEED COMPILED AN IMPRESSIVE RECORD OF PUBLIC SERVICE ACHIEVEMENT.

THIS RECORD SPEAKS FOR ITSELF, AND IN FACT, HAS BEEN PRAISED BY "NONE-OTHER" THAN THE WASHINGTON POST, WHICH HAS CITED CLARENCE THOMAS' "QUIET BUT PERSISTENT LEADERSHIP" OF THE EEOC.

DON'T POLITICIZE THE CONFIRMATION PROCESS

UNFORTUNATELY, SOME OF THE "POLITICALLY-CORRECT" LITMUS-TESTERS HERE IN WASHINGTON WANT TO DENY THE FULFILLMENT OF CLARENCE THOMAS'S ALL-AMERICAN DREAM, NOT BECAUSE HE LACKS THE TALENT OR THE DRIVE, BUT BECAUSE HE IS A SUCCESSFUL BLACK MAN WHO ALSO HAPPENS TO BE A REPUBLICAN AND A CONSERVATIVE.

BEFORE HIS CONFIRMATION HEARINGS EVEN BEGIN, THESE LITMUS-TESTERS WOULD EXPECT JUDGE THOMAS TO GO BEYOND EXPLANATIONS OF JUDICIAL OR LEGAL PHILOSOPHY AND ANSWER SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ABOUT SPECIFIC CASES THAT MAY COME BEFORE HIM AS A SITTING MEMBER OF THE SUPREME COURT.

IF THE ANSWERS AREN'T THE "CORRECT" ONES, IF JUDGE THOMAS DOESN'T MARK THE "RIGHT BOX," THEN HE SHOULD NOT BE CONFIRMED -- OR SO THE REASONING GOES.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, THIS LITMUS-TEST APPROACH HAS BEEN REJECTED BY ANYONE WHO IS SERIOUS ABOUT MAINTAINING THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE FEDERAL JUDICIARY.

AS FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN BURGER RECENTLY CAUTIONED, AND I QUOTE: "NO NOMINEE WORTHY OF CONFIRMATION WILL ALLOW HIS OR HER POSITION TO BECOME FIXED BEFORE THE ISSUES ARE FULLY DEFINED...BEFORE THE SUPREME COURT WITH ALL THE NUANCES THAT ACCOMPANY A CONSTITUTIONAL CASE. PRESIDENTS AND LEGISLATORS HAVE ALWAYS HAD PLATFORMS AND AGENDAS, BUT FOR JUDGES THE ONLY AGENDA SHOULD BE THE CONSTITUTION AND LAWS AGREEABLE WITH THE CONSTITUTION."

THE SENATE SHOULD HEED THE FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE'S ADVICE AND RESIST THE TEMPTATION OF TRANSFORMING FEDERAL JUDGES INTO POLITICIANS.

FEDERAL JUDGES SHOULD "JUDGE" ONLY FROM THE FEDERAL BENCH.

THEY SHOULD NOT, AND MUST NOT, "PRE-JUDGE" CASES FROM THE BENCH OF A SENATE CONFIRMATION HEARING.

CLARENCE THOMAS UNDERSTANDS THIS, BUT HE ALSO UNDERSTANDS REAL-LIFE PEOPLE WITH REAL-LIFE PROBLEMS.

HE WILL BE A PEOPLE'S JUSTICE, COMMITTED TO THE RULE OF LAW, BUT EQUALLY COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE OF JUSTICE FOR ALL AMERICANS.

CLARENCE THOMAS HAS SUCCEEDED IN PUTTING PINPOINT, GEORGIA ON THE MAP.

AND I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT HE WILL LEAVE HIS MARK ON THE SUPREME COURT WHEN CONFIRMED BY THE UNITED STATES SENATE...THE SOONER, THE BETTER.

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