



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

RONNIE MUSGROVE  
GOVERNOR

September 24, 2003

Honorable Bill Frist  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
461 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Thomas Daschle  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
509 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Frist and Daschle:

The nomination of Federal District Judge Charles Pickering to the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals is once again coming before the U.S. Senate in Washington for consideration. We are the Democratic statewide officials of Mississippi.

We know Charles Pickering personally and have known him for many years. We believe Judge Pickering should be confirmed for this appointment and serve on the court.

Judge Pickering chose to take stands during his career that were difficult and often courageous. He has worked for racial reconciliation and helped unify our communities. Toward that objective, he formed a biracial commission in his home county to address community issues and led an effort to start a program for at-risk youth. Furthermore, Judge Pickering helped establish and serves on the board of the Institute for Racial Reconciliation at the University of Mississippi.

We are all active Democrats, Charles Pickering was, before rising to the Federal Bench, an active Republican. It is our hope that Party labels can be transcended in this fight over his nomination. We should cast a blind eye to partisanship when working to build a fair and impartial judiciary.

The U.S. Senate has a chance to demonstrate a commitment to fairness. Judge Pickering's record demonstrates his commitment to equal protection, equal rights and fairness for all. His values demand he respect the law and constitutional precedents and rule accordingly. He does.

He has never been reversed on any substantive issue in a voting rights or employment discrimination case that has come before him. His rulings reflect his support for the principle of one man one vote. Judge Pickering ruled the 1991 Mississippi legislative redistricting plan unconstitutional for failing to conform to one man one vote standards and ordered a new election as the remedy.

In 1963, at the age of 26, Judge Pickering was elected Prosecuting Attorney of Jones County. While holding this office he confronted the effects of racial hatred and saw firsthand its result in the form of extensive Ku Klux Klan violence. It was a horrible time in Mississippi. Judge Pickering took a public stand against the Klan violence and terrorism. He worked with the FBI to prosecute and stop the Klan. Charles Pickering testified against Klan leader Sam Bowers in the murder of civil rights activist Vernon Dahmer.

In the 1960s, Charles Pickering stood up for the voting rights of African Americans, and for the equal protection of all. In the 1970s and 1980s he led his community, children's schools, political party and church in integration and inclusion. Today, he is a voice for racial reconciliation across our state. As a judge, he is consistent in his fairness to everyone, and deemed well qualified by those who independently review his rulings, temperament and work.

Mississippi has made tremendous progress in race relations since the 1960s and Charles Pickering has been a part of that progress. We ask the United States Senate to stand up to those that malign the character of Charles Pickering, and give him an up or down vote on the Senate Floor.

Very truly yours,

RONNIE MUSGROVE  
Governor of Mississippi

Eric Clark  
Secretary of State

Mike Moore  
Attorney General

Lester Spell  
Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce

George Dale  
Commissioner of Insurance

**"Judge Pickering's record of working with both races and working for racial reconciliation in past and present years is beyond what many whites we have supported and continue to support in positions of leadership have done in our state. I hope and pray understanding of the need for racial reconciliation by Judge Pickering will help strengthen the Fifth Circuit's fortitude in resolving racial issues and concerns."**

- Phillip West, Civil Rights Activist for 38 Years; Past Vice President, Mississippi NAACP; Past President, Natchez NAACP; Past Chairman, Mississippi Association of Supervisors Minority Caucus; Current Chairman Mississippi Legislative Black Caucus; State Representative District 94; African American Elected Official

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- Democratic Statewide Elected Officials of Mississippi**