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July 15, 2002

Darrell E. Jordan
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The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
224 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy:

As past presidents of the State Bar of Texas, we join in this letter to strongly recommend an affirmative vote by the Judiciary Committee and confirmation by the full Senate for Justice Priscilla Owen, nominee to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

Although we profess different party affiliations and span the spectrum of views of legal and policy issues, we stand united in affirming that Justice Owen is a truly unique and outstanding candidate for appointment to the Fifth Circuit. Based on her superb integrity, competence and judicial temperament, Justice Owen earned her Well Qualified rating unanimously from the American Bar Association Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary - the highest rating possible. A fair and bipartisan review of Justice Owen's qualifications by the Judiciary Committee certainly would reach the same conclusion.

Justice Owen's stellar academic achievements include graduating *cum laude* from both Baylor University and Baylor Law School, thereafter earning the highest score on the Texas Bar Exam in November 1977. Her career accomplishments are also remarkable. Prior to her election to the Supreme Court of Texas in 1994, for 17 years she practiced law specializing in commercial litigation in both the federal and state courts. Since January 1995, Justice Owen has delivered exemplary service on the Texas Supreme Court, as reflected by her receiving endorsements from every major newspaper in Texas during her successful re-election bid in 2000.

The status of our profession in Texas has been significantly enhanced by Justice Owen's advocacy of *pro bono* service and leadership for the membership of the State Bar of Texas. Justice Owen has served on committees regarding legal services to the poor and diligently worked with others to obtain legislation that provides substantial resources for those delivering legal services to the poor.

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Hon. Patrick Leahy

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Justice Owen also has been a long-time advocate for an updated and reformed system of judicial selection in Texas. Seeking to remove any perception of a threat to judicial impartiality, Justice Owen has encouraged the reform debate and suggested positive changes that would enhance and improve our state judicial branch of government.

While the Fifth Circuit has one of the highest per judge caseloads of any circuit in the country, there are presently two vacancies on the Fifth Circuit bench. Both vacancies have been declared "judicial emergencies" by the Administrative Office of the U. S. Courts. Justice Owen's service on the Fifth Circuit is critically important to the administration of justice.

Given her extraordinary legal skills and record of service in Texas, Justice Owen deserves prompt and favorable consideration by the Judiciary Committee. We thank you and look forward to Justice Owen's swift approval.

Sincerely,



Darrell E. Jordan

On behalf of former Presidents of the
State Bar of Texas

Blake Tartt

James B. Sales

Hon. Tom B. Ramey, Jr.

Lonny D. Morrison

Charles R. Dunn

Richard Pena

Charles L. Smith

Jim D. Bowmer

Travis D. Shelton

M. Colleen McHugh

Lynne Liberato

Gibson Gayle, Jr.

David J. Beck

Cullen Smith

cc: The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
Office of Legal Policy U. S. Justice Department