



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

March 15, 2016

The Honorable Charles Grassley
Chair
Judiciary Committee
United States Senate
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Judiciary Committee
United States Senate
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Leahy:

The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Rights Task Force and other members of CCD write to express our strong support for a timely confirmation hearing on President Obama's nominee to succeed Justice Antonin Scalia on the U.S. Supreme Court. CCD is a coalition of over 100 national disability organizations working for national public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society.

It would be unusual and very troubling to leave the Court without full capacity for more than a year, until after the next president takes office. People with disabilities depend on a fully functioning Supreme Court to interpret and give effect to the important civil rights and other protections that Congress afforded them, including those in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Rehabilitation Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Social Security Act. These protections are key to maximizing independence and autonomy for people with disabilities and enabling them to be full and equal participants in society.

The U.S. Supreme Court has played a significant role in shaping how these crucial civil rights protections are interpreted and enforced. For example, in 1999—nine years after Congress passed the ADA with broad bipartisan support—the Supreme Court issued its landmark ruling in *Olmstead v. L.C.*, 527 U.S. 581 (1999), which has paved the way for thousands of individuals with disabilities to leave institutions and live in their own homes and communities. In *Tennessee v. Lane*, 541 U.S. 509 (2004), the Court affirmed Congress's power under the ADA to require access for people with disabilities to our justice system and bolstered the law's application to other state functions, such as voting systems, public education, and correctional institutions.

The Supreme Court plays a critical role in resolving hard-fought battles to protect individuals with disabilities and ensure that they are afforded the same access and opportunities as people without disabilities. The uncertainty and risks associated with a Supreme Court that is not fully functional harm people with disabilities and others who rely on the courts to protect their rights. We urge you to hold hearings on any individual nominated by President Obama and allow a vote based on that nominee's credentials. We expect both the President and the Senate to fulfill this critical constitutional duty.

Sincerely,

Advance CLASS

The Advocacy Institute

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Dance Therapy Association

American Foundation for the Blind

Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Autistic Self Advocacy Network

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Brain Injury Association of America

Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund

Easter Seals

Epilepsy Foundation

Institute for Educational Leadership

Justice in Aging

Learning Disabilities Association of America

Lutheran Services in America Disability Network

National Council on Independent Living

National Disability Institute

National Disability Rights Network

National Down Syndrome Congress

National Health Law Program

National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives

Parent to Parent USA

School Social Work Association of America

Non-members of CCD also joining:

The Advocrat Group

Disability Power and Pride

DC Advocacy Partners