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Assembly California Legislature



KEVIN KILEY
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, SIXTH DISTRICT

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CONSUMER PROTECTION
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HIGHER EDUCATION
JUDICIARY

September 13, 2017

Senator Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein,

We write to express our grave concern over comments you made at the September 6 hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which are contrary to the values of our diverse and inclusive state, and which have raised questions as to whether you feel California's over 11 million Catholics – along with our state's millions of Muslims, Hindus, Protestants, Jews, and other people of faith – are welcome to participate in public life.

At that hearing, you questioned the qualification of Notre Dame Professor Amy Barrett to serve as a federal judge on the basis of her Catholic faith, telling the Professor that the "dogma" of Catholicism "lives loudly within you, and that's of concern when you come to big issues that large numbers of people have fought for years in this country." Your suggestion that a judicial nominee should be rejected because of her personal religious beliefs is alarming, and without precedent in our recent history.

Indeed, your comments are offensive to fundamental American principles: freedom of religion, freedom of conscience, and the separation of church and state. They profoundly misunderstand what it means to be a person of faith, and promote a myth that faith and citizenship are mutually exclusive. As Notre Dame President John Jenkins said in a letter to you, "It is chilling to hear from a United States Senator that [religious belief] might now disqualify someone from service as a federal judge. I ask you and your colleagues to respect those in whom 'dogma lives loudly' – which is a condition we call faith. For the attempt to live such faith while one upholds the law should command respect, not evoke concern."

Your comments also evoked painful memories of less inclusive times in this country, such as the skepticism John F. Kennedy faced about his own Catholic faith as a candidate for President in 1960. Since that time, we have made great progress in welcoming people of all backgrounds into public life. Major candidates for President have been Catholic, Jewish, Mormon, and Baptist. Members of Congress include Buddhists, Catholics, Hindus, Jews, Mormons, Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Protestants, and Unitarians. Regrettably, your comments threaten to take us backwards.

We respectfully ask that you apologize to Professor Barrett, to California's Catholic community, and to all people of faith. We further ask that you make clear your commitment to religious pluralism and provide assurance that future nominees for public office will not be met with the same prejudice as Professor Barrett.

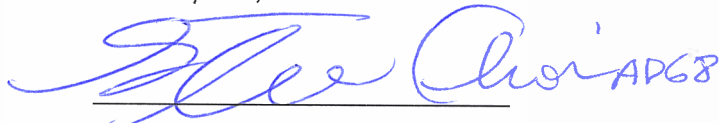
Sincerely,



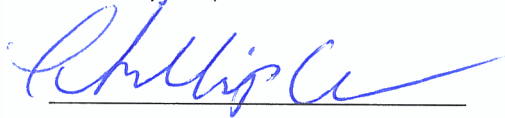
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Assemblyman, 6th District



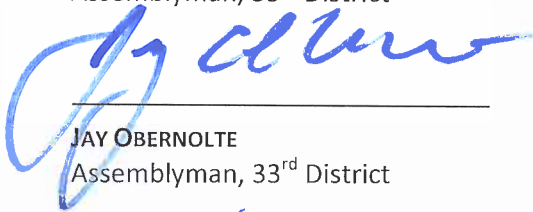
MARC STEINORTH
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Assemblyman, 55th District



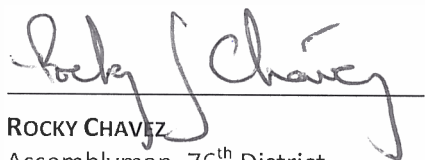
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MELISSA MELENDEZ
Assemblywoman, 67th District



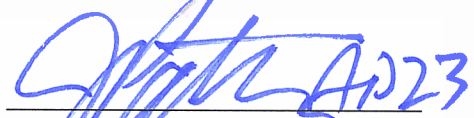
FRANK BIGELOW
Assemblyman, 5th District



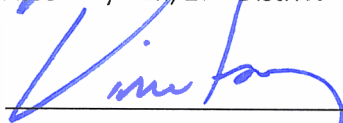
ROCKY CHAVEZ
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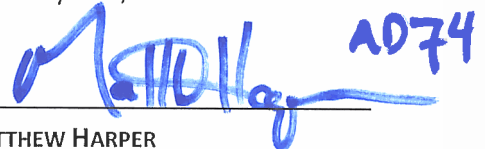
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Assemblyman, 23rd District



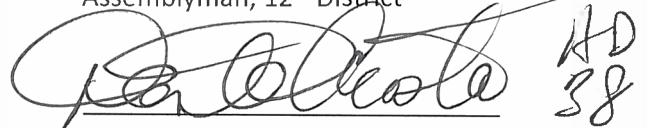
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Assemblyman, 74th District



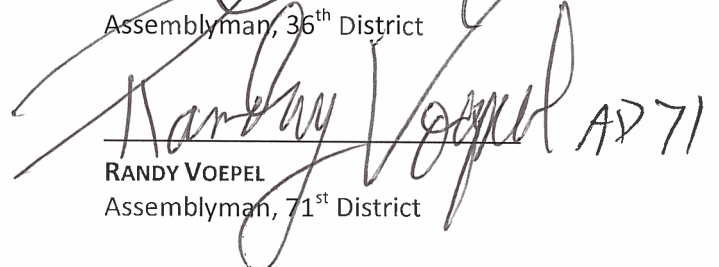
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Assemblyman, 38th District



TOM LACKEY
Assemblyman, 36th District



RANDY VOEPEL
Assemblyman, 71st District

Brian Dahle AD09

BRIAN DAHLE
Assemblyman, 1st District

Marie Waldron

MARIE WALDRON
Assemblywoman, 75th District

Jordan Cunningham AD35

JORDAN CUNNINGHAM
Assemblyman, 35th District

Chad Mayes AD42

CHAD MAYES
Assemblyman, 42nd District

Brian Maienschein

BRIAN MAIENSCHIN
Assemblyman, 77th District

William Brough

WILLIAM BROUGH
Assemblyman, 73rd District

Devon Mathis

DEVON MATHIS
Assemblyman, 26th District

Travis Allen

TRAVIS ALLEN
Assemblyman, 72nd District

Catharine Baker AD16

CATHARINE BAKER
Assemblywoman, 16th District