

Chairman Lindsey Graham
Senate Judiciary Committee
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman Jerrold Nadler
House Judiciary Committee
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Dianne Feinstein
Senate Judiciary Committee
152 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Ranking Member Doug Collins
House Judiciary Committee
2142 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

February 19, 2019

Dear Chairmen Graham and Nadler and Ranking Members Feinstein and Collins:

We write in support of increased transparency and accountability in our nation's federal courts and ask that you advance legislation this Congress that achieves these goals.

We believe that carefully crafted reform legislation will result in a better public understanding of, and respect for, the judiciary. We also believe that it is critical that the ethics rules and disclosure requirements that apply to the judiciary are equally applied to the Supreme Court and that no entity within our third branch of government is, or is perceived to be, above the law.

We are grateful that so many Members—approximately one-fourth of Congress—supported legislation last session to improve openness at all levels of the judiciary. Some of those bills would have required live streaming from appellate courtrooms, while others would have enhanced public access to court records. Others still would have authorized more rigorous ethics and recusal rules for the Supreme Court.

Though we may not have supported every provision in these bills, they represent the growing interest we and members of the public have in improved judicial accountability and efficiency.

As you consider reforms in these areas, we urge you to craft legislation that addresses five principles:

1. Improved broadcast access

To ensure the public can follow the work of the judiciary as it occurs

2. Improved access to court documents

To ensure the public can retrieve federal case filings with greater ease and at a lower cost

3. Improved workplace conduct rules

To ensure the judiciary promotes a harassment-free work environment

4. Improved oversight and ethics rules

To ensure all federal judges, including Supreme Court justices, follow a robust ethics rubric, post their annual financial statements online and explain their periodic recusals

5. Improved judicial administration

To ensure the judiciary has the staff and resources it needs to carry out its mission

We hope to serve as a resource for you as you recommence this important work in the 116th Congress, and we look forward to discussing how these principles can help guide your legislative agenda.

Sincerely,

Fix the Court

Project on Government Oversight

R Street Institute

American Society of Magazine Editors

Free Law Project

Niskanen Center

American Society of News Editors

Government Accountability Project

Open the Government

Associated Press Media Editors

Government Information Watch

Republicans for the Rule of Law

Association of Alternative Newsmedia

National Press Photographers Association

Stand Up Republic

Electronic Privacy Information Center

National Security Counselors

Tully Center for Free Speech at Syracuse Univ.