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PRESS RELEASE Re: Catholic Bar Association Support for the Nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court of the United States

President Donald J. Trump has nominated Judge Amy Coney Barrett to serve as an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. The Catholic Bar Association enthusiastically endorses her nomination for the post, not because she is Catholic but because she is exceptionally well-qualified to serve on the Court.

Unfortunately, before and after her nomination was formally announced, some members of the press expressed crass anti-Catholic bigotry, misrepresenting and distorting the effect of her religious beliefs. Similar appalling bigotry was expressed by United States Senators at hearings on Judge Barrett's first nomination to the federal appellate bench. The Catholic Bar Association objects to these offensive expressions of anti-religious prejudice, as do all other Americans of good will. As a nominee for a federal position, Judge Barrett's Catholic beliefs are not relevant to her fitness to serve as an Associate Justice: "...no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States." Art. VI., *United States Constitution*. This Constitutional provision protects nominees of all religious faiths, or of no faith.

Discussions of Judge Barrett's judicial philosophy, academic writing, and legal opinions are reasonable and appropriate; invidious discussions of her religious beliefs are not. Judge Barrett has stressed repeatedly that her religious beliefs will not dictate her judicial decisions, and there is no evidence in her many opinions as a federal appellate court judge that they have. The widespread anti-Catholic reporting and commentary serves no purpose but to disparage, distress, and demean. Moreover, it fosters religious hatred and intolerance in what ought to be a just and pluralistic society.

Anti-Catholic bigotry has been an unfortunate recurring feature of American history. When debating the Constitution, some Anti-Federalists opposed Article VI's prohibition of religious tests, in part because the provision would permit Catholics to serve in the federal government. In the 19th century, anti-Catholic bigotry led to riots in Philadelphia, Louisville, and Baltimore; the "Know Nothing" Party campaigned across America on an expressly anti-Catholic platform; and Blaine Amendments were passed by states throughout the country in an effort to stifle Catholic education that benefitted racial and ethnic minorities. Catholics have been targets of Ku Klux Klan attacks and intimidation; Governor Al Smith's 1928 bid for the presidency failed due, in part, to organized anti-Catholicism; and President Kennedy had to overcome unfounded claims that the Pope would direct his actions in the Oval Office.

Anti-Catholic bigotry has no place in today's America and we pray for it to cease, even as we pray for those who promote it. By every measure, Judge Barrett is qualified to sit on our nation's highest court. The Catholic Bar Association calls for an end to commentary about Judge Barrett's religious beliefs, and for her confirmation hearings to be conducted without expressions of anti-religious bigotry or intolerance. The Catholic Bar Association strongly urges the Senate Judiciary Committee quickly to recommend the confirmation of Judge Barrett, and urges the full Senate to consent to her nomination to the Supreme Court.

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