

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Opposition Campaign Declares Victory in Defeat of Federal Judicial Nomination of CCA General Counsel Gus Puryear

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For Immediate Release

Nashville, TN – Following the inauguration of President Obama, former President Bush's pending federal judicial nominations are no longer viable. Consequently, an opposition campaign has declared victory after waging a successful battle against a controversial nominee for U.S. District Court in the Middle District of Tennessee.

On June 13, 2007, former President Bush nominated Gustavus A. Puryear IV for a lifetime appointment to the federal bench in Nashville. Mr. Puryear serves as general counsel for Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), the nation's largest for-profit prison firm, which is headquartered in Nashville.

Mr. Puryear's nomination drew the attention of Alex Friedmann, a former prisoner who served time at a CCA prison a decade ago. Friedmann is now associate editor of *Prison Legal News*, a monthly publication that covers criminal justice issues, and vice president of the Private Corrections Institute, a watchdog group that opposes prison privatization.

Friedmann organized opposition to Mr. Puryear's nomination after research revealed that Mr. Puryear was an inexperienced and unqualified nominee who had not acted in the public interest during his tenure at CCA, who would have conflicts of interest as a federal judge, and who was a member of a discriminatory country club. Further, during Mr. Puryear's nomination hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Feb. 12, 2008, Mr. Puryear made inaccurate and misleading remarks concerning the unsolved homicide of Estelle Richardson, a female prisoner who died at a CCA-run jail.

"I extend my thanks to those members of the Senate Judiciary Committee who were willing to give serious consideration to the information we uncovered relative to Mr. Puryear's qualifications to serve as a federal judge," said Friedmann, who coordinated the opposition campaign.

In addition to the Private Corrections Institute, organizations that opposed the Puryear nomination included the Alliance for Justice; the National Lawyers Guild; the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; Grassroots Leadership (a civil rights organization); the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA); and Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility.

Additionally, three national women's rights groups submitted opposition letters to the Senate Judiciary Committee based on Mr. Puryear's membership in the Belle Meade Country Club, which denies female members the right to vote and hold office. Those groups included the National Organization for Women, National Council of Women's Organizations, and Women's Equal Rights Legal Defense and Education Fund.

Mr. Puryear's nomination was supported by both of Tennessee's Senators, Lamar Alexander and Bob Corker, in spite of the fact that the American Bar Association had ranked Mr. Puryear in the bottom 20 percent of his fellow judicial nominees. Neither Senator Alexander nor Corker acknowledged that they had received tens of thousands of dollars in campaign contributions from Mr. Puryear, CCA, and CCA executives.

The year-long opposition to Mr. Puryear's nomination generated extensive news media coverage, including two Associated Press national wire stories, front-page articles in the *Tennessean* (Nashville's daily paper) and coverage in other local publications, including the *Nashville Scene*, *Nashville Post* and *Nashville City Paper*. Mr. Puryear's contentious nomination was also mentioned in the *National Law Journal*, *TIME* magazine, *Harper's Magazine* and *Mother Jones*, and on Alternet, Democracy NOW! and Politico.com.

"While some may consider it ironic that a former CCA prisoner managed to derail the judicial nomination of CCA's general counsel, the fact remains that Mr. Puryear was a questionable, partisan candidate who had conflicts and problematic issues, both past and present, that ensured his nomination would not survive scrutiny," said Friedmann. "The opposition campaign simply provided the necessary level of scrutiny."

Tennesseans Against Puryear, a grassroots opposition campaign organized by former CCA prisoner and current criminal justice activist Alex Friedmann, was formed for the express purpose of defeating the federal judicial nomination of CCA general counsel Gus Puryear. Full details are available at: www.againstpuryear.org.

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