

Three National Women's Rights Groups Oppose Federal Judicial Nomination of Gustavus A. Puryear IV, Based on Country Club Membership

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Women's Rights Organizations Submit Letters to Senate Judiciary Committee Concerning Federal Judicial Nominee Gus Puryear

WASHINGTON, DC – Three national women's rights organizations have issued formal statements opposing the pending federal judicial nomination of Gustavus A. Puryear IV, who has been nominated for a lifetime appointment to the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee. Mr. Puryear presently serves as general counsel for Corrections Corp. of America (CCA), the nation's largest for-profit prison firm.

The National Council of Women's Organizations (NCWO), the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the Women's Equal Rights Legal Defense and Education Fund (WERLDEF) have expressed concerns related to Mr. Puryear's membership in a private club where women are not afforded voting privileges.

Mr. Puryear maintains membership in the Belle Meade Country Club in Nashville, Tennessee – an exclusive club where only members in the "Resident Member" class are permitted to vote or hold office. The Club's approximately 600 Resident Members are all male; women members have a different category, called "Lady members," and cannot vote on club business. Women can only obtain Resident Member status with voting rights by being sponsored by one of the all-male Resident Members. No women have been successfully sponsored for such a membership.

In a statement provided to the Senate Judiciary Committee, Mr. Puryear said, "To my knowledge, during my membership at the club, it has not discriminated on the basis of race, sex, or religion." He noted that as an associate member he cannot vote either.

According to Susan Scanlan, who chairs the NCWO, a non-profit coalition of more than 230 women's organizations representing over eleven million women, "If Mr. Puryear is appointed to the federal bench, it is difficult for us to conceive how women defendants and plaintiffs, or indeed women attorneys, could appear before him and expect to receive impartial and equal consideration given Mr. Puryear's past membership in the Belle Meade Country Club and his defense of that membership."

NOW President Kim Gandy, writing on behalf of the organization's 500 local and campus affiliates, observed that the Belle Meade Country Club's member handbook, Constitution and By-Laws do not include a non-discrimination policy. She noted the judicial Code of Conduct prohibits judges from "membership in organizations that practice invidious discrimination on the basis of sex."

Gloria Allred, an attorney with the Los Angeles firm of Allred, Maroko & Goldberg, and President of WERLDEF, stated she had "significant concerns regarding Mr. Puryear's membership in a private country club in which women members are unable to vote or hold office," and found it "disturbing" that no women have Resident Member status.

The letters submitted by NCWO, NOW and WERLDEF were sent to Senator Patrick Leahy, Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and to Senator Arlen Specter, Ranking Member on the Committee. The statements were provided by the women's rights organizations after they were contacted by the Private Corrections Institute and *Prison Legal News*, which oppose Mr. Puryear's judicial nomination.

Prison Legal News (PLN), founded in 1990, is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting human rights in U.S. prisons. *PLN* publishes a monthly newsletter that reports on corrections and criminal justice-related issues, with approximately 6,800 subscribers nationwide. The Private Corrections Institute (PCI) is a non-profit agency that works to educate the public about the dangers associated with the privatization of correctional services. Both PCI and *PLN* oppose prison privatization.

For further information, please contact:

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Tallahassee, FL 32
(850) 980-0887
www.privateci.org

For additional information on the opposition campaign against Mr. Puryear's federal judicial nomination:

www.againstpuryear.org



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Of Women's Organizations**
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March 18, 2008

Honorable Senator Patrick Leahy, Chairman
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Judicial Nomination of Gustavus A. Puryear IV

Dear Senator Leahy:

This correspondence is in reference to the federal judicial nomination of Mr. Gustavus A. Puryear IV. The National Council of Women's Organizations has serious concerns about Mr. Puryear as a candidate for a lifetime judicial appointment, based upon his membership in the Belle Meade Country Club.

As you may know, NCWO is a nonpartisan, nonprofit coalition of more than 230 women's organizations across the nation collectively representing over eleven million women. Since 1983, NCWO has convened the leadership of major women's organizations dedicated to focusing on national and international issues and public policy agendas affecting women and girls.

According to the Private Corrections Institute, Mr. Puryear stated, in reference to his country club membership, "To my knowledge, during my membership at the club, it has not discriminated on the basis of race, sex, or religion."

Only the Resident Members of the club are allowed to vote on club business or hold office. All of the Resident Members are male. Although there is no specific policy that prohibits women from being Resident Members, none are Resident Members. New members must be "proposed" (sponsored) by existing Resident Members. Therefore, if no women are proposed by the all-male Resident Members they can not become Resident Members with voting rights. Women members are called "Lady members" and have a separate non-voting membership class.

As we understand this, Mr. Puryear, an attorney and federal judicial nominee, is defending his membership in a private club where none of the women members can vote, and women can only achieve voting status by being sponsored by the all-male group of Resident Members, which has not done so. Despite this apparent disparity, Mr.

Puryear stated he isn't aware that the club has discriminated on the basis of sex (gender).

If Mr. Puryear is appointed to the federal bench, it is difficult for us to conceive how women defendants and plaintiffs, or indeed women attorneys, could appear before him and expect to receive impartial and equal consideration given Mr. Puryear's past membership in the Belle Meade Country Club and his defense of that membership.

The American people deserve better judicial nominees than those who embrace in their private lives membership in an organization that denigrates the equal rights and status of women.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Scanlan
Chair

cc: Senator Arlen Specter, Ranking Member

National Organization for Women



Kim Gandy
President

Olga Vives
Executive Vice President

Melody Drnach
Action Vice President

Latifa Lyles
Membership Vice President

March 25, 2008

Senator Patrick Leahy, Committee Chair
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
433 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Arlen Specter, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
711 Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Pending Nomination of Gustavus Adolphus Puryear IV

Dear Senator Leahy and Senator Specter:

On behalf of the National Organization of Women (NOW), I am contacting you regarding Gustavus A. Puryear IV, who has been nominated by President Bush to serve on the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee. More specifically, we are contacting you concerning Mr. Puryear's membership in the Belle Meade Country Club, Nashville, TN, and his defense of that membership.

The National Organization of Women (NOW) is the largest organization of feminist activists in the United States, with more than 500,000 contributing members and 500 local and campus affiliates in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Since our founding in 1966, NOW's goal has been to take action to bring about full equality for all women.

According to news reports, the Belle Meade Country Club only allows members in the Resident Member category to vote or hold office. All of the Club's approximately 600 Resident Members are reportedly male; women occupy a different membership class without voting privileges. The only way in which a woman can become a Resident Member with voting privileges is to be sponsored by one of the existing all-male Resident Members. No woman has been so sponsored, which implies intentional gender-based discrimination. Further, the Belle Meade Country Club's membership handbook, Constitution and By-laws do not contain any non-discrimination policy.

Despite this history, Mr. Puryear has denied any knowledge of gender-based discrimination at the Club while he has been a member.

Senators Leahy and Specter
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Canon 2C of the Code of Conduct for United States Judges prohibits judges from membership in organizations that practice invidious discrimination on the basis of sex. Mr. Puryear's membership in a private club in which no women members are afforded voting privileges, while only all-male Resident Members can vote or hold office, raises significant concerns about the fitness of this nominee to hold judicial office.

We therefore oppose Mr. Puryear's nomination for a federal judicial appointment.

Sincerely,



Kim Gandy
President

**Women's Equal Rights Legal Defense and Education Fund
(WERLDEF)**

March 7, 2008

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Chairman
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Arlen Specter, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
711 Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Mr. Gustavus A. Puryear IV

Dear Chairman Leahy and Senator Specter:

I am contacting you in reference to the pending federal judicial nomination of Gustavus A. Puryear IV. Mr. Puryear's nomination hearing was held on February 12, and the Committee on the Judiciary is presently considering his answers to written questions. I oppose his confirmation.

I am an attorney and a partner in the Los Angeles law firm of Allred, Maroko & Goldberg. I have been practicing law for approximately 32 years. My law firm, Allred, Maroko & Goldberg, represents plaintiffs in cases involving employment discrimination, including sex, race, age, physical handicap, sexual orientation discrimination, Aids discrimination, sexual harassment and wrongful termination. We are also well-known for our work on behalf of victims in civil rights, rape, child sexual abuse and murder cases.

We have handled more women's rights cases than any other private law firm in the nation.

I have won countless honors for my pioneering legal work on behalf of women's rights and rights for minorities, including the President's Volunteer Action Award for Outstanding Volunteerism presented to me by President Ronald Reagan at the White House for my work on child support.

An active feminist, I founded and am currently serving as President of the Women's Equal Rights Legal Defense and Education Fund (WERLDEF).

I am also the author of "Fight Back And Win - My Thirty-Year Fight Against Injustice And How You Can Win Your Own Battles."

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I have significant concerns regarding Mr. Puryear's membership in a private country club in which women members are unable to vote or hold office.

According to information received from the Private Corrections Institute, Mr. Puryear stated in a Questionnaire provided to the Committee that he was a member of the Belle Meade Country Club. He further said, "To my knowledge, during my membership at the club, it has not discriminated on the basis of race, sex, or religion."

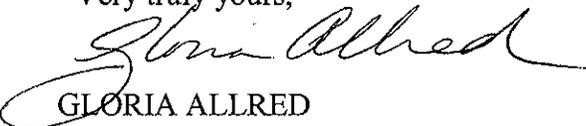
According to the club's By-Laws only Resident Members may vote or hold office. All of the club's approximately 600 Resident Members are male; consequently, no female members of the club, who are referred to as "Lady members," are able to vote or hold office in the organization.

In his answers to written questions submitted by the Committee members, Mr. Puryear explained this inequity by stating, "I am not aware, nor have I been made aware, that any woman has been proposed or has sought to be proposed as a resident member." New members must be proposed by the all-male class of Resident Members; thus, it is disturbing that no woman has been proposed for a membership that would afford voting privileges.

Further, it is difficult to reconcile Mr. Puryear's assertion that he was unaware of any gender discrimination at the Belle Meade Country Club when the Club's entire voting membership is male, "Lady members" are not allowed to vote, and no women have been proposed for Resident Member status that would afford voting privileges. The club's Constitution and By-laws do not include a non-discrimination statement. Mr. Puryear is an accomplished attorney and a judicial candidate; his denial of any knowledge of gender discrimination at the club under these circumstances is highly suspect.

I strongly encourage the Committee to seriously examine Mr. Puryear's statements in light of the obvious and admitted disparities at the Belle Meade Country Club in terms of the rights and privileges afforded to women members.

Very truly yours,



GLORIA ALLRED

President

(WERLDEF)