

May 4, 2023

Senator Lisa Murkowski
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Daniel Sullivan
302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators,

We are members of the Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association, the governing entity for the Alaska Bar Association. We write to share our concern with Alaska's lengthy unfilled federal judicial vacancy and to encourage you to continue your efforts to timely forward your recommendation(s) for a nominee with well-qualified member(s) of the Alaska Bar Association.

We recognize that as members of the bar, you are likely already familiar with our work and can appreciate our interest in this matter. The Bar Association's mission is to (1) regulate the practice of law; (2) promote reform in the law and in judicial procedure; (3) facilitate the administration of justice; (4) encourage continuing legal education for the membership; and (5) increase the public service and efficiency of the Bar. All Alaskans deserve fair, timely, and impartial justice. Judges carry out an instrumental role in achieving that goal and ensuring justice is served, litigants feel heard, rights are respected, and cases proceed in a fair and timely manner.

There are three active U.S. District Judges who carry out critical roles for our federal judiciary and whose service is critical to the administration of justice in our state. In December 2021, former Chief Judge Timothy Burgess assumed senior status, resulting in a district court vacancy that remains unfilled. As a result, the State of Alaska has now been without a third of its assigned active federal judges for almost 17 months.

We are grateful for your efforts to date in reviewing potential nominees, and we recognize that in March, Senator Murkowski requested the Bar obtain the names of qualified candidates and submit its list of recommendations. Since then, and consistent with past practice, the Bar solicited names to be included in a bar poll of its members. That poll is currently circulating, and will close May 15, 2023. The results (excluding comments) will then be posted on the Bar's website, and the candidates' names, letters of interest, resumes, bar poll results, and comments will be available to your offices for further review. We appreciate having been asked to poll our bar membership and to share the bar's feedback with you going forward.

We do not write today to recommend nor advocate for the relative merit of any candidate(s) over another. We write only to share our concern about the length of the vacancy and its impacts on Alaska at large and the administration of justice more broadly. We ask you to help assure Alaska's federal judicial vacancy does not remain needlessly vacant, and that the nomination proceeds as expediently as possible.

Thank you for your attention and efforts on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Diana Wildland, President
Board of Governors of the Alaska Bar Association