

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations



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Rob Keithan
Director

May 18, 2005

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the over 1050 congregations that make up the Unitarian Universalist Association, I write to express our opposition to the confirmation of Priscilla Owen to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. Justice Owen's record on the Texas Supreme Court is far outside the mainstream and of particular concern to our religious community.

We are especially troubled by Owen's rulings on civil rights, her tendency to favor corporations over consumers and working families, and her punitive rulings in matters of abortion. Throughout her career, Justice Owen has shown extraordinary willingness to put her own extreme views ahead of both the law and the best interests of the most vulnerable Americans. For example, during her tenure on the Texas Supreme Court, Justice Owen pushed to create additional hurdles for minors seeking abortion that were not found in the original statute, increasing the likelihood of parental abuse for young women already in very difficult situations.

The Unitarian Universalist Association believes that a fair and independent judiciary is a critical safeguard for all Americans, from protecting civil and workers rights to ensuring religious liberty and the rule of law. Justice Owen's opinions have consistently failed to meet these standards, and at times have clearly ignored both the intent and letter of the relevant Texas statutes. While serving as a member of the Texas Supreme Court and a colleague of Justice Owen, Alberto Gonzales, current US Attorney General, wrote in an opinion that Justice Owen's dissenting view of an abortion case would have been "an unconscionable act of judicial activism."

Owen's academic qualifications, likeable personality, and experience are not in question. However, judges at all levels must be committed to upholding the law and defending the Constitution, regardless of their own personal opinions. We believe that Judge Owen's record clearly shows that she does not possess these qualities.

We also oppose the use of the "nuclear option" to modify Senate rules so that Brown or other nominees could be approved with only a majority vote. We believe that the American public is best served by a nominations process that seeks to build a broad consensus, not by one that seeks to silence minorities. Again, we urge you to oppose the nomination of Justice Priscilla Owen to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

In Faith,

Robert C. Keithan, Director