

NOMINATION OF JUDGE CLARENCE THOMAS TO BE ASSOCIATE JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1991

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:07 a.m., in room 325, Senate Caucus Room, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Strom Thurmond, presiding.

Present: Senators Biden, Kennedy, Metzenbaum, Heflin, Simon, Thurmond, Simpson, Specter, and Brown.

Senator THURMOND. The committee will come to order. Senator Biden has requested I go ahead and open the hearing and proceed.

We are very pleased to have you all with us, and we are sorry we didn't get to you last night. You may go ahead now and make your statement. We have Mr. Palmer and Ms. Alvarez. We are glad to have them.

PANEL CONSISTING OF JOHN E. PALMER, PRESIDENT AND CEO, EDP ENTERPRISES, INC., ON BEHALF OF THE HEARTLAND COALITION FOR THE CONFIRMATION OF JUDGE CLARENCE THOMAS, AND J.C. ALVAREZ, VICE PRESIDENT, RIVER NORTH DISTRIBUTING

Mr. PALMER. Thank you. Good morning to the distinguished chairman, Senator Thurmond, and to all of the esteemed members of this U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee.

My name is John E. Palmer. I was born in Kansas and reared in Missouri, truly the heartland of our great Nation. I am the president and CEO of EDP Enterprises, Inc., a full food service management company which specializes in feeding military troops. We currently feed our courageous men and women at Fort Leonard Wood, MO, and Fort Riley, home of the Big Red One in the great State of Kansas.

I have traveled to our Nation's Capital this day to represent and raise the collective voice of a group named the Heartland Coalition for the confirmation of Judge Clarence Thomas. This group is comprised of men and women, blacks and Hispanics, Kansans and Missourians, liberals and conservatives, business men and women, elected officials, and, of particular note, prominent Democrats and prominent Republicans.

The common thread which bonded this diverse group of independent minds was a willingness to step forward and boldly call at-

tention to the fact that there does exist a consensus within the minority community of our country which supports the confirmation of Judge Thomas to the Supreme Court of the United States.

We firmly believe that we embody the true essence of mainstream America defined. The coalition formed to demonstrate the bipartisan, culturally diverse support which this nomination has throughout America. We are reflective of the 54 percent who supported Judge Thomas' confirmation prior to even the beginning of these hearings, as illustrated in a USA Today newspaper poll. We are representative of the 63 percent who currently back the confirmation of Judge Thomas, as pointed out in an ABC News poll.

We find Judge Thomas to be a man of integrity, of compassion, of principle, of strong moral fiber, of ability, and a man who is fiercely independent.

Although some views of Judge Thomas may differ from those held by Justice Thurgood Marshall, he, like Justice Marshall, has overcome hardships, discrimination, and deprivation to prepare himself for the challenge of our country's highest court.

It is important that you know the Heartland Coalition is not a professional lobbying group. There is no organizational structure. There are no officers. There exists no committees. Not one single, solitary dollar of the millions of dollars which have changed hands fueling campaigns both for and against the confirmation found its way into the Heartland Coalition.

You see, this coalition evolved as a result of a conversation between two people about the onslaught of unyielding and uncompromising denunciations of Judge Thomas by national civil rights and legislative organizations. The participants in this conversation strongly disagreed; neither believed these positions to be representative of a consensus of the working class minority America.

While the motives of these groups were never at issue nor questioned, one participant in this conversation, Linda Hunter, of Jefferson City, MO, the State capital, said, "Let's call some of our friends, both Republican and particularly Democrats, known, respected leaders throughout the heartland, and see how they feel."

Phone calls were made; schedules were coordinated; consensus on a press release was reached; a date and time was decided; a press conference was held; and, thusly, the Heartland Coalition was born.

The U.S. Supreme Court needs not a man who knows all. We believe that our highest court needs the diversity of youth, vitality, and promise of growth; representation of leadership of the future; one who has dedicated his life to the attainment of a colorblind society; one who has demonstrated the courage to travel the road less traveled by.

Senator THURMOND. I will have to call your attention to the fact that your time is up. You have 5 minutes today. We have lots of witnesses. Can you finish up in just a little bit?

Mr. PALMER. Just a real quick second here, Senator. Thank you.

One whose very life is characterized by an insatiable appetite for knowledge, punctuated by a willingness to work, tempered by an openness to listen and learn as no man or woman has come to the Court yet fully formed; one who has dared to awaken, arouse, and

stir the soul and conscience of minority America by boldly stating that it is broken and in desperate need of repair.

We, from the heart of America, respectfully urge you, the U.S. Senators, elected Members of the most prestigious, distinguished, and powerful body in the world, to vote to confirm Judge Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Palmer follows:]