



NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

1450 DUKE STREET • ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314 • 703-836-7827

CHARLES BUD' MEEKS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TESTIMONY OF
SHERIFF MARSHALL E. HONAKER
PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION
BEFORE THE U.S. JUDICIARY COMMITTEE OF THE U.S. SENATE
ON THE NOMINATION OF
JUDGE CLARENCE THOMAS
FOR
THE U.S. SUPREME COURT

September 20, 1991

Mr. Chairman: It is a distinct honor and privilege to come before you and members of this committee to share with you the reasons why the National Sheriffs' Association wholeheartedly supports the nomination of Judge Clarence Thomas for the United States Supreme Court.

I am Marshall Honaker, Sheriff of Bristol, Virginia. For the last 18 years I have held the office of Sheriff. I am a career law enforcement professional, with a background in The Office of Sheriff dating back to 1957. I have been president of the Virginia State Sheriffs' Association and it is my pleasure this year to serve as president of the National Sheriffs' Association. The National Sheriffs' Association was established in 1940, representing the nation's sheriffs, deputy sheriffs, police executives, corrections personnel, and other criminal justice officials. The National Sheriffs' Association, with its 25,000 members, represents the 3,096 sheriffs of this country. Because of my background in law enforcement, and because of the concerns of the Association's members, I am especially grateful for the chance to address you today.

As the drug war rages on and law enforcement officers continue to struggle with a rising tide of violent crimes nationwide, we need an anti-crime Associate Justice with the qualifications of Judge Thomas.

Throughout his career, Judge Thomas has preserved his personal integrity, honesty, and principles, maintaining these qualities in the face of discrimination, bigotry, and political rivalry. His appointment to the Supreme Court will provide an experienced, just voice on the fundamental issues plaguing this nation today. President Bush has thoughtfully chosen a man, a demonstrated leader, who will make a difference.

The National Sheriffs' Association surveyed our sheriff members about Judge Thomas' nomination. Sheriff Robert C. Rufo, member of the National Sheriffs' Association and president of the Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association, said, "Judge Thomas brings an exemplary educational background and diverse legal experience to the bench. Additionally, he appears to possess the humanistic qualities critical to the issues before the nation's highest court." Along with Sheriff Rufo's comments, NSA headquarters heard words of praise from sheriffs across the country about Judge Thomas. They spoke of Thomas as a person of the highest calibre, an anti-crime person, a judge who recognizes the tough job facing law enforcement professionals today. Those who know him, and those who read of his credentials are equally enthusiastic. Our nation's sheriffs shoulder their position of responsibility in the criminal justice system with pride. They fully recognize and hope for the invaluable assistance of Judge Thomas' acknowledged talents and qualifications. Frankly, we need, and we want Judge Thomas and what he has to offer the entire criminal justice system.

It is our definite belief that he will approach the cases that come before the Court with a commitment to deciding them fairly, as the facts and the law require.

Never in our nation's history have we needed more desperately to add to our highest judicial body a totally fair, impartial, brilliant new Associate Justice. Unquestionably, now is the hour for this man. He has our admiration - and our respect. On behalf of your nation's sheriffs, and the National Sheriffs' Association, let me urge you to proceed with all due haste to see that Judge Thomas is seated on that bench.

Thank you.