

said—and I think maybe some of you, in the statements just made, probably have indicated to me that you understand this—26 members of the Congressional Black Caucus don't represent 30 million black Americans, any more than 26 white Congressmen could represent 200 million white Americans. That was her opinion.

Besides that, we have polls—and I know we cannot make decisions here in the Congress based upon public opinion polls, and maybe part of the problem with Congress is maybe too often we do, but we have polls showing a majority of black Americans support the confirmation of Judge Thomas to the Supreme Court, and only this week, the ABC News poll showed 58 percent of black Americans support Judge Thomas' confirmation.

I also had an article that I had collected for this hearing that quoted then Lt. Gov. Douglas Wilder, speaking out, espousing what I think are some of the same ideas as Judge Clarence Thomas might advocate, and I would read just a couple of sentences from the Washington Post story in the fall of 1986:

In speech after speech, Wilder, who surprised many politicians with his November 5th election here, is telling black audiences something that they say white politicians can't suggest—stop making excuses, and take control of your destiny.

And then going on to quote.

But Wilder, a 55 year-old Richmond lawyer who calls himself a conservative on many issues, is delivering his message with lowkey rhetoric that warns blacks not to expect government to resolve many of their problems.

So I don't feel like I can ask you questions, just kind of give you some idea of some wrestling that goes on as I compare your opinions with those of other black Americans.

I guess I would just close by expressing my view that Judge Thomas shouldn't be condemned because he challenged the status quo in his search for new answers to some old problems. He probably was able to do a better job of that as a policymaker than he is going to be able to do as a Supreme Court Justice, but he will be in a powerful position and will be a leader for these causes, even though it is interpreting law rather than helping to make law.

Well, I appreciate your listening to me, and I also appreciate your testimony.

Mr. CONYERS. Senator Grassley, could I just point out to you that the NAACP had a discussion—as a matter of fact, they met with Judge Thomas—and there was one chapter that decided not to go along with the decision to urge that his nomination be rejected, and that was the chapter in Compton, CA. That was out of approximately 2,200 chapters across the country, and I think it really illustrates the exception rather than the rule.

I might also point out in my own district, I can tell you quite assuredly that there is no majority of people who support Clarence Thomas. What we have is a phenomenon I'd like to just explain that might make you rest a little bit more easily about what seems to be support for Judge Thomas.

When Judge Thomas, African-American, was nominated to succeed Justice Thurgood Marshall, nationally, black America was overjoyed. I would warrant to you that 90-something percent of black America had never heard of Clarence Thomas before. With all due respect to him; he was an inside-the-beltway government bureaucrat. But as we began to reveal the difficulty with his track

record and the reasons that we opposed him, which spread not just from the Congressional Black Caucus but through the church leadership, the civil rights community, the labor community, women's organizations, the understanding of him has completely changed. And I think that you should really understand that dynamic. We were so happy to have a black name that that led to immediate support, regardless of whether we knew him or not.

Mr. STOKES. Senator, if I could just make an additional point here, the lady who spoke to you is absolutely right in the sense that we do not speak for all black Americans, nor do we presume that the 26 of us in the Congressional Black Caucus can speak for all Americans.

First, while many of us represent in our individual congressional districts, majority black constituents, we also represent white Americans. Some of us have congressional districts that are a majority white as opposed to being majority black. And we don't presume that we can speak for all white Americans, either, by virtue of that in our districts.

What we do, I think, claim is this. We are not self-appointed or self-acclaimed leaders. Every 2 years, we do what you have to do in the Senate every 6 years, and that is go back to the people and get elected again. We go back every 2 years. We get elected, and we represent individually 550,000 people. So collectively, there are 26 of us representing 550,000 people, both black and white, who go to the polls and vote for us.

So to that degree, we think we speak for those people to whom we go back every 2 years with a record, and they then vote upon us to return to the Congress based upon that record.

Mr. OWENS. Senator, I don't want to be redundant. I want to say pretty much the same thing. There are a lot of people who trivialize and try to minimize the importance of elected officials, but as one fellow elected official to another, you know what we go through to get elected, and you know that those of us who are in office through this process do represent the majority of the people in our districts. And some of us have been in public office for more than 20 years, so I think we speak not as self-appointed leaders, but we speak with great authority. And if you look across the country at elected officials not only in Congress but in State legislatures and city legislatures, you will find that the overwhelming majority of those elected officials feel the same way we do about the appointment of Clarence Thomas.

Mr. WASHINGTON. Senator, let me only add the point that I was attempting to make earlier and perhaps did not make clear enough. It is unnecessary to attack one person in order to state their point of view, so I would ask you to look with a jaundiced eye upon those, because we are elected, as are the Members of the Senate. The people that you are talking to are either anointed or appointed, but not elected; 25 of the 26 black Americans who have been elected by white, Hispanic, Asian, black, other people to the Congress of the United States have stated our position. That should not subject us to attack; they shouldn't attack the body politic because they disagree with the result.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me point something out, if I may, to my colleagues which I found interesting, I thought insightful, and I think