

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