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Cardinal Keeler Urges Senate To Reject Pro-Abortion Test For Judicial Nominees

WASHINGTON— Cardinal William Keeler wrote to members of the U.S. Senate today in anticipation of their being called upon to advise on and consent to presidential nominations for the Federal bench, including the U.S. Supreme Court.

In the letter, Cardinal Keeler rejected the view that “nominees who oppose the purposeful taking of innocent human life” are “unfit for judicial office in the United States.” “By any measure,” he said, “support for the Supreme Court’s 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision is an impoverished standard for assessing judicial ability.” Cardinal Keeler is Chairman of the Committee for Pro-Life Activities, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

“When considering nominees the Senate should not allow itself to be held captive to such an unfair and unreasonable standard,” he wrote.

This is the text of his letter:

“Dear Senator,

As you begin the work of the 109th Congress, the Senate will again be called upon to advise on and consent to presidential nominations for the Federal bench, perhaps even for the U.S. Supreme Court.

“As you know, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is active in the courts on many matters, especially in cases on abortion, the death penalty, civil rights, discrimination and the role of religion in society. At the same time, it is not the practice of our Conference to take positions on particular presidential nominees. However, we want to respond to reports about the judicial confirmation process that have caused us and others serious concern.

“We are troubled by reports that national abortion advocacy groups, and even some U.S. senators, view nominees who oppose the purposeful taking of innocent human life as somehow unfit for judicial office in the United States. It is further reported that attempts would be made to deny them a vote on confirmation by the full Senate.

“Insisting that judicial nominees support abortion throughout pregnancy is wrong. By any measure, support for the Supreme Court’s 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision is an impoverished standard for assessing judicial ability. For over three decades, *Roe* has sparked more informed criticism and public resistance than any other court decision of the late 20th century. Even legal scholars who support abortion have criticized *Roe* for not being grounded in the U.S. Constitution. Further, in 2000, the Supreme Court relied on *Roe* to rule that the gruesome and inhumane practice of partial-birth abortion must be constitutionally protected. When considering nominees the Senate should not allow itself to be held captive to such an unfair and unreasonable standard.

“There is no doubt that the Catholic Church stands out for its commitment to the right to life from conception until natural death. This ethic has profound consequences not only for

abortion, but for many other areas of life, including the death penalty, the application of scientific research to human subjects, the right to adequate health care, and the role of the state in promoting the common good. Our civil society will be all the poorer if Senators, as a matter of practice, prevent a Senate vote on well-qualified judicial nominees whose consciences have been formed in this ethic.

“I pray God will bless Congress’ efforts to ensure that Federal judges are persons of integrity and good character who will respect the rights of all, born and unborn.

Sincerely,

Cardinal William H. Keeler
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman, Committee for Pro-Life Activities
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops”

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