



January 7, 2020

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**OPPOSE THE CONFIRMATION OF CORY WILSON TO THE  
U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI**

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 200 national organizations committed to promoting and protecting the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, I write in strong opposition to the confirmation of Cory Wilson to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi.

Mr. Wilson is an ideological firebrand whose record shows he is more suited to serve as a Fox News commentator than federal judge. In recent op-eds, he has railed against LGBTQ rights, access to health care, reproductive freedom, voting rights, and common-sense gun safety laws. He has engaged in *ad hominem* attacks on Secretary Hillary Clinton, President Barack Obama, and other prominent Democrats. His extreme, right-wing views would render him incapable of serving as a neutral arbiter, and the Senate must reject his nomination for a lifetime appointment to the federal judiciary.

**Attacks on LGBTQ Rights:** Mr. Wilson is a staunch opponent of LGBTQ rights and equality. As a state legislator, he voted for the controversial bill HB 1523,<sup>1</sup> which has been called the nation's most extreme anti-LGBTQ law.<sup>2</sup> The law allows Mississippians with anti-LGBTQ religious beliefs to refuse service to married same-sex couples, people who have sex outside of marriage, and transgender people. The law permits state employees to refuse to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples, public school counselors to turn away LGBTQ youth in crisis, and health care providers to deny transgender people access to health care at any time.<sup>3</sup>

In a strident and offensive 2012 op-ed, Mr. Wilson wrote that “gay marriage is a pander to liberal interest groups and an attempt to cast Republicans as intolerant, uncaring and even bigoted.”<sup>4</sup> He continued: “At the time [1990s], the idea of homosexual marriage was so beyond seriousness that I thought it could never happen. I soon came to see that ‘tolerance,’ as that term is used by liberals, really means zero tolerance for traditional, religious or conservative views. The culture warriors on the left demand unconditional surrender.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.jacksonfreepress.com/news/2016/apr/02/roll-call-who-voted-and-against-anti-lgbt-house-bi/>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.aclu-ms.org/en/news/lgbtq-advocates-condemn-mississippi-hb-1523>.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p200-201.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

And in another 2012 op-ed, “Eat more chicken,” Mr. Wilson defended the CEO of Chick-fil-A against calls for boycotts of the company in the wake of the CEO’s public opposition to marriage equality. Mr. Wilson declared: “So it has come to this. Private citizens who dare oppose marriage ‘equality’ (read: full sanction of homosexual marriage) will now be bashed, banned, and bankrupted, simply for expressing their views.”<sup>6</sup> As his discriminatory statements demonstrate, Mr. Wilson possesses a fervent anti-LGBTQ agenda, and it would make him incapable of ruling even-handedly on matters affecting LGBTQ rights. These views would make it impossible for any LGBTQ litigant to feel as though Mr. Wilson could treat them fairly and impartially.

**Hostility to Health Care:** Mr. Wilson has repeatedly attacked the Affordable Care Act (“ACA”), which has provided critical health care coverage to tens of millions of Americans.

In a 2012 op-ed full of rhetoric and hyperbole, Mr. Wilson wrote: “Then there is Obamacare, the ‘Affordable Care Act,’ which will produce an unaffordable \$2.6 trillion in new cost over the next ten years. Nancy Pelosi famously said we had to pass Obamacare to find out what was in it. A cadrillion dollars of spending, turns out. Instead of eleven weeks of vacation for every American worker, that would be over 28 weeks off. Which, coincidentally, will be the waiting time to see your government-assigned doctor once Obamacare kicks in fully.”<sup>7</sup> In another indignant op-ed, Mr. Wilson called the ACA “a massive, unworkable intrusion by the federal government into one sixth of our economy (the same economy which has all but suffocated under Obama’s other policies).”<sup>8</sup>

After President Obama predicted in 2012 that the Supreme Court would uphold the ACA, Mr. Wilson ranted: “I hope the Court checks Obama’s dangerous standard of what is constitutional: Obamacare ‘will be upheld because it should be upheld.’ A valid law is what King Barack says is a valid law.”<sup>9</sup> He then fumed that “Obama’s views reflect what Pelosi, Reid, and enlightened liberals everywhere have honestly believed from the inception of this debate: the power of government is unlimited and should be used by the governing class to impose whatever it wishes on the rest of us.”<sup>10</sup>

In a June 28, 2012 op-ed, “Obama’s day of reckoning,” Mr. Wilson contended that the Supreme Court would soon strike down the ACA, and he asserted: “If the law is struck down, Team Obama will flail, attack the Court, and try to explain how they wasted billions of dollars and even more political capital ramming a freedom-infringing mess down our throats. Colossal incompetence and arrogance, all while the economy moldered. If Obama’s agenda lies in ruins (amongst those Greek columns from 2008), it couldn’t happen to more deserving folks.”<sup>11</sup> He added: “For the sake of the Constitution, I hope the Court strikes down the law and reinvigorates some semblance of the limited government the Founders intended.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p187-188.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p176.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p189-190.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p220-221.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p193.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

Still seething about the ACA in 2013, Mr. Wilson opined that “Obamacare is less about healthcare than it is about redistribution of wealth and power. For those objectives, liberals are apparently happy to shut down the American dream.”<sup>13</sup> In another 2013 op-ed, he expressed opposition to Medicaid expansion in Mississippi and called the ACA “liberal-utopia-dictated healthcare.”<sup>14</sup> In 2014, Mr. Wilson wrote an op-ed, “ACA: Big, intrusive government,” in which he labeled the law “perverse” and “illegitimate” and complained: “The big promises made by supporters have all proven false. ‘If you like your health care plan you can keep it,’ is 2013’s lie of the year.”<sup>15</sup> These are not the statements and viewpoints of someone who is capable of serving as an even-handed jurist.

**Attacks on Reproductive Freedom:** Mr. Wilson also holds extreme views on reproductive freedom. In response to a Mississippi Right to Life candidate questionnaire he filled out when running for office, he checked the “Yes” box in response to the question: “Do you support the complete and immediate reversal of the *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* decisions, thereby allowing the state legislatures and the Congress to once again protect unborn children?”<sup>16</sup> He also expressed support for a requirement that a person considering an abortion receive a lecture about the unproven theory that the fetus will experience pain; support for laws that would allow the murder of a pregnant person to be treated as a double homicide crime regardless of fetal viability; and support for bans on embryonic stem cell research.<sup>17</sup>

As a state legislator, Mr. Wilson voted for legislation to gut critical protections guaranteed by *Roe* and the Constitution. He voted for a bill, HB 732, that would ban abortions after cardiac activity is detected,<sup>18</sup> which can be as early as six weeks and well before many people even know they are pregnant.<sup>19</sup> Mr. Wilson also voted for a bill, HB 1510, that would prohibit abortions after 15 weeks;<sup>20</sup> the bill was struck down as unconstitutional by a federal judge in 2018.<sup>21</sup> And he supported legislation to defund Planned Parenthood.<sup>22</sup>

**Defended Discriminatory Photo ID Laws:** Mr. Wilson has expressed reflexive support for discriminatory photo ID laws and contempt for those who disagree with him on the merits of such laws. In a November 1, 2012 op-ed, “Supressing [sic] common sense,” he wrote: “The Democratic line is that voter ID is a solution in search of a problem, that there are no cases of voter fraud that ID would prevent. The Rachel Maddows of the media world have joined the chorus of ‘voter suppression’ right on cue from Team Obama. This is as phony as the ‘war on women’ . . . .”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p93-94.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p143-145.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p76-77.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p489-493.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2019/pdf/votes/house/0370021.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> <https://rewire.news/legislative-tracker/law/mississippi-heartbeat-ban-hb-732/>.

<sup>20</sup> <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2018/pdf/votes/house/0320008.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> <https://rewire.news/legislative-tracker/law/mississippi-gestational-age-act-hb-1510/>.

<sup>22</sup> <https://yallpolitics.com/index.php/yp/post/rep-cory-wilson-session-recap-msleg/feed/>.

<sup>23</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p164.pdf>.

In an October 2, 2013 op-ed, Mr. Wilson took another potshot at the Obama administration's approach to photo ID laws. He criticized Justice Department observers who had come to Mississippi to monitor a local election, and he asserted: "Those same observers also might spend less time suing states to block voter ID, as Attorney General Eric Holder again announced they were doing in North Carolina on Monday. I think most of the mostly black Rowan voters came with IDs already out, ready to show. No intimidation observed. But facts have never deterred the Obama administration when politics could be played."<sup>24</sup>

**Opposes Common-Sense Gun Safety Laws:** Mr. Wilson opposes reasonable firearms restrictions that would make our communities safer. As a state legislator, he voted for a bill, HB 1083, to allow concealed carry on all public property, including on college campuses.<sup>25</sup> The bill was opposed by a prominent education organization, the Mississippi State Institutions of Higher Learning, which stated: "HB 1083 compromises our ability to protect and ensure the safety of those on our campuses because it nullifies and prohibits any policies and/or authority to designate sensitive areas of campus where weapons should not be allowed."<sup>26</sup> The bill was not passed by the state senate.

Mr. Wilson has also been a member of the National Rifle Association ("NRA"), the extreme advocacy organization that has engaged in a massive lobbying campaign to oppose common-sense gun safety laws. In 2015, he filled out an NRA questionnaire and took extreme positions: he stated he opposed any restrictions on the sale or possession of semi-automatic firearms (the kind used in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, as well as the mass shooting in Las Vegas) and limits on the capacity of their magazines; he opposed universal background checks on all private sales or transfers of firearms; and he opposed any type of state registration or licensing of firearm owners.<sup>27</sup>

**Ideological and Hyperpartisan Comments:** Mr. Wilson's ideological, right-wing mindset is further demonstrated by his false and mean-spirited comments about Secretary Hillary Clinton, President Barack Obama, the Democratic Party, and the media. He would be utterly incapable of serving as or being perceived as a neutral arbiter.

- In an August 23, 2016 tweet, Mr. Wilson wrote "#Crooked Hillary" after asserting: "More emails, more evidence of Clinton pay-for-play and dishonesty. Hillary and Bill Clinton, Inc."<sup>28</sup> A few weeks later, he tweeted: "Felony dumb or willfully ignorant? Troubling read: FBI Data Dump Shows #CrookedClinton Is Criminal and Clueless."<sup>29</sup> Mr. Wilson also tweeted, in September 2016, that "Clinton mishandled classified, but sure knew how to destroy docs under subpoena."<sup>30</sup> And on November 3, 2016 – just days before Election Day – Mr. Wilson amplified a Fox News

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<sup>24</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p95-97.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2018/pdf/votes/house/0370002.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> <https://mississippitoday.org/2018/02/07/sec-officials-threaten-repercussions-on-concealed-carry-bill/>.

<sup>27</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p450-453.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> <https://twitter.com/CoryWilsonMS/status/768171181052755968>.

<sup>29</sup> <https://twitter.com/CoryWilsonMS/status/773487358956171264>.

<sup>30</sup> <https://twitter.com/CoryWilsonMS/status/773490203717664768>.

hatchet job on Hillary Clinton, tweeting: “Worth the listen. @BretBaier lays out details of FBI investigation into Clinton emails, Foundation pay-to-play. #Scandalabra.”<sup>31</sup>

- In a May 30, 2013 screed entitled “Obamination,” Mr. Wilson asserted: “This needs to be repeated, from every possible outlet, until the American people realize the seriousness of what is going on. The chain of scandals related to Benghazi coverup, IRS targeting of conservatives, and Department of Justice intrusion into Associated Press journalists’ phone records represent a chilling pattern of behavior by our government.... This is a systematic abuse of power by the most paranoid and politicized White House since Nixon’s. Many of us thought that electing as President a radical leftist with no experience in governing was a disaster waiting to happen. It’s no longer waiting.... For those who still support this President, it’s time to put down the Kool-aid, and start paying attention.”<sup>32</sup>
- In a November 2012 op-ed following President Obama’s re-election, Mr. Wilson complained: “The most important election in our lifetimes has turned into the most disappointing outcome of our lifetimes” and “Obama waged the smallest, most cynical, and among the most dishonest campaigns in our history.”<sup>33</sup>
- In a September 6, 2012 op-ed entitled “The Democrat’s [sic] new math,” Mr. Wilson took another potshot at Democrats. He wrote that his 8-year-old child “conceptualizes numbers the way Democrats do. In other words, he, like they, has no real concept or concerns. We of course are praying that he grows out of it, and think he will. Not so with Democrats.”<sup>34</sup>
- In a May 24, 2012 op-ed, Mr. Wilson sarcastically wrote that “an intellectually honest Democrat” was a “rare sighting” and “exotic creature.”<sup>35</sup> In the op-ed he declared that then-Mayor Cory Booker had “demolished and diminished Team Obama’s self-righteous class warfare.”<sup>36</sup> In a 2013 op-ed, Mr. Wilson declared: “Republicans are the adults in the room. Obama & Co. are increasingly shrill, dishonest and intellectually bankrupt.”<sup>37</sup>
- In an August 11, 2013 op-ed, “White House baloney not fooling anyone,” Mr. Wilson wrote that “a ‘parade of distractions’ and ‘political posturing’ are the essence of Obama’s leadership” and: “Remember the ‘war on women’? That was certainly phony, pretty much like all the Obama 2012 campaign. Obama’s ‘green jobs’ initiatives (Solyndra, among others) also qualify as phony, except the billions of wasted tax dollars were all too real.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> <https://twitter.com/CoryWilsonMS/status/794188293546000388>.

<sup>32</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p120.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p162-163.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p176.pdf>.

<sup>35</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p202-203.pdf>.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*

<sup>37</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p100.pdf>.

<sup>38</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p111-113.pdf>.

- In a July 28, 2018 tweet, Mr. Wilson disparaged congressional candidate Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, ranting: “The new face of @TheDemocrats. As we say in the South, ‘bless her heart.’ And this claptrap is rapidly becoming the Dem agenda. #CanSheFindVenezuelaOnAMap”<sup>39</sup>
- Mr. Wilson has made paranoid, Trump-like grievances about the media. In a November 22, 2012 op-ed, he asserted: “The ‘media’ are now so slanted as to be dangerously unreliable.”<sup>40</sup> In an October 11, 2012 op-ed, he argued: “The mainstream media seem to be actively rigging the 2012 election. Rather than reporting news, the media are ‘shaping’ facts to guide the public to vote as they ‘should.’ There are many blatant examples of tampering with news to fit a leftist ‘narrative.’”<sup>41</sup> In an August 23, 2012 op-ed, Mr. Wilson alleged: “Sort of like President Obama’s miserable record in office, the media’s heavy left slant has now been so frequently pointed out, with clear evidence, that it becomes background noise.... The mainstream media has been a willing lapdog for the Obama administration, in some cases taking headlines and content directly from White House operatives.”<sup>42</sup>
- Mr. Wilson, demonstrating intolerance for non-Christians, complained about what he views as “political correctness” in America. Despite the reality that only 70 percent of Americans identify as Christian,<sup>43</sup> Mr. Wilson grumbled that “store clerks and cashiers seem clearly to have been trained not to say ‘Merry Christmas.’ And, we were at a restaurant recently for dinner, when we said ‘Merry Christmas’ to our waiter, he said with relief, ‘I am glad you said that. When I said it earlier, a patron replied that it wasn’t politically correct’.... Whole segments of America live in a perpetual state of being ‘offended’.... More Christmas, not less, would be a good part of the antidote.”<sup>44</sup>

Mr. Wilson’s many diatribes and denunciations reveal an ideological bias that would make him ill-equipped to assess facts and render impartial decisions in cases involving any issues that have a social justice, racial justice, or political dimension.

**Ideological Affiliations:** Mr. Wilson joined the far-right Federalist Society in 1992 as a first-year law student, and he is currently a member of the Federalist Society Mississippi Chapter. This out-of-the-mainstream legal organization represents a sliver of America’s legal profession – just four percent – yet over 80 percent of President Trump’s circuit court nominees, and a significant number of his district court nominees, have been Federalist Society members. He has also served as a partisan Republican operative, working on nearly two dozen political campaigns and contributing thousands of dollars to right-wing Republican candidates.

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<sup>39</sup> <https://twitter.com/CoryWilsonMS/status/1023250752104476673>.

<sup>40</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p162-163.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p170-171.pdf>.

<sup>42</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p179-180.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>.

<sup>44</sup> <https://afj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wilson-Attachments-p83-84.pdf>.

**Disturbing Lack of Diversity:** Mr. Wilson, like most of President Trump's nominees, is a white male. President Trump's lack of commitment to diversifying the federal judiciary is deeply disturbing; he has appointed the least diverse group of nominees in decades.<sup>45</sup> Of his 55 appellate nominations, none are African American. Only one is Latinx. And only 11 are women. His district court nominees are similarly nondiverse. Our nation's great diversity should be reflected in its government institutions, especially the federal judiciary, which serves as the ultimate guardian of our rights and liberties. At a time when the legal profession has more women and attorneys of color than ever before, President Trump's record on judicial diversity is truly appalling.

For the foregoing reasons, The Leadership Conference urges you to oppose the confirmation of Cory Wilson to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi. Thank you for your consideration of our views. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Mike Zubrensky, Chief Counsel, or Lena Zwarenstejn, Fair Courts Campaign Director, at (202) 466-3311.

Sincerely,



Vanita Gupta  
President & CEO

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<sup>45</sup><https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/02/13/trumps-87-picks-federal-judges-92-white-just-one-black-and-one-hispanic-nominee/333088002/>.