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AAJC

June 8, 2021

**SUPPORT THE CONFIRMATION OF VERONICA ROSSMAN TO THE
U.S. COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE TENTH CIRCUIT**

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 220 national organizations committed to promoting and protecting the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, we write to express our strong support for the confirmation of Veronica Rossman to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit.

Given her demonstrated record of defending the Constitution by protecting civil rights, Ms. Rossman is highly qualified. She has spent most of her career as a public defender, representing clients who could not afford an attorney. She currently serves as senior counsel and supervisory assistant federal public defender at the Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Districts of Colorado and Wyoming, where she has worked for more than 10 years. While there, she has personally handled and supervised more than 100 criminal appellate cases stemming from every judicial district in the Tenth Circuit. Previously, Ms. Rossman spent three years as a visiting professor at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law. She has also worked as a staff attorney for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, and in counsel and associate roles at law firms in Denver and Washington, D.C. Ms. Rossman has clerked for Justice A. William Maupin of the Supreme Court of Nevada and is a graduate of Columbia University and the University of California Hastings College of the Law. Ms. Rossman's community involvement includes serving as a member of several educational and legal organizations, including the Colorado Bar Association's Hate Crimes Education Program and the Tenth Circuit Criminal Pattern Jury Instruction Committee. Her professional and legal experience qualify her to serve on the Tenth Circuit.

Ms. Rossman would bring much-needed professional diversity to the federal judiciary. If confirmed, she would be the only former public defender on the Tenth Circuit.¹ Public defenders play an essential role in our criminal-legal system by ensuring that the constitutional rights of people accused of crimes are protected. Yet, lawyers with this kind of professional experience are notably underrepresented on the federal bench. Our federal judiciary has four times as many former prosecutors as former criminal defense attorneys.² At the appellate level, fewer than 3 percent of all active federal judges have experience as a

¹ [“Biographical Directory of Article III Federal Judges, 1789-present.”](#) *Federal Judicial Center*. Accessed June 2021. Search includes all Tenth Circuit judges who listed “public defender” or “federal defender” as non-volunteer work experience.

² Neily, Clark. [“Are a Disproportionate Number of Federal Judges Former Government Advocates?”](#) *Cato Institute*. September 18, 2019.

public defender.³ It is vital that our judiciary reflects the diversity of the legal profession, including more judges experienced in ensuring that their clients have access to justice and that their rights are recognized in court.

In addition to her impressive qualifications, Ms. Rossman's lived experience would also bring important perspectives to the judiciary. Notably, when she was a young child, Ms. Rossman and her family emigrated to the United States as political and religious refugees fleeing antisemitic persecution in Moscow. The Tenth Circuit is home to nearly 1.5 million immigrants;⁴ it is imperative that judges share characteristics and experiences with the people their decisions impact. Courts rely on public trust for legitimacy, and diversity helps improve both public trust and judicial decision-making.⁵ Diversity also helps ensure that rulings reflect a wide variety of viewpoints, especially from perspectives and communities that have historically been excluded from the judiciary, including Black, Brown, and Asian American and Pacific Islander individuals, women, LGBTQ people, and people with disabilities.⁶

Throughout her career, and especially in her role as a public defender, Ms. Rossman has demonstrated her commitment to safeguarding constitutional and legal rights and protections. Her experience defending the rights of the people most marginalized by the criminal-legal system, particularly those who cannot afford an attorney, will make her an asset to our federal judiciary.

We strongly urge the Senate to confirm Veronica Rossman to the Tenth Circuit. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Lena Zwarensteyn, Senior Director of the Fair Courts Campaign, at (202) 466-3311. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Wade Henderson
Interim President & CEO



LaShawn Warren
Executive Vice President of Government Affairs

³ [“Biographical Directory of Article III Federal Judges, 1789-present.”](#) *Federal Judicial Center*. Accessed June 2021. Search includes all currently active federal judges on appellate courts who list “public defender” or “federal defender” as non-volunteer work experience.

⁴ [“2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.”](#) *United States Census Bureau*. Accessed June 2021. Search includes Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Utah, and Wyoming.

⁵ Sen, Maya. [“Diversity, Qualifications, and Ideology: How Female and Minority Judges Have Changed, or Not Changed, Over Time.”](#) 2017 *Wis. L. Rev.* 367 (2017).

⁶ *Id.*