



March 2, 2022

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AAJJC

Interim President and CEO
Wade Henderson

SUPPORT SWIFT CONFIRMATION OF SOHN TO FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION AND BEDOYA TO FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 230 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, UnidosUS, the nation's largest Latino civil rights and advocacy organization, and the National Urban League, a historic civil rights organization dedicated to economic empowerment in order to elevate the standard of living in historically underserved urban communities, we write to convey our strong support for confirmation of Gigi B. Sohn and Alvaro M. Bedoya to serve as commissioners, respectively, of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Federal Trade Commission (FTC). We urge the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation to report both nominations to the full Senate favorably and the Senate to promptly confirm both nominees.

It is critical that all members of the Committee—no matter how they plan to vote on the nominees—attend the executive session scheduled for March 3, 2022. Any failure by absent senators to perform the duties for which they were elected will result in real losses for Americans at a time when the work of these agencies is more important than ever.

Our coalition is committed to ensuring that media, telecommunications, competition, consumer protection, and privacy policy affirms and extends our nation's longstanding commitment to civil rights. Both the FCC and FTC have been operating without a full complement of commissioners since the start of the Biden/Harris administration. The need for swift action on these nominations is therefore critical as further delay will harm implementation of key civil rights priorities.

The FCC is currently implementing key provisions of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, including the new Affordable Connectivity Program, as well as the directive to prohibit digital discrimination. To ensure our nation's broadcasting industry is diverse, competitive and serves local communities, the FCC must act quickly to complete the 2018 Quadrennial Review and initiate and complete the 2022 Quadrennial Review in a timely manner. The FCC must also take further steps to address the dysfunctional market and unjust practices in incarcerated communications and implement Congress' directive to collect equal employment opportunity data in broadcasting.

The FTC's responsibility to protect and enhance competition and consumer protection is particularly important as much of our economy moves online. With a full complement of commissioners, the FTC can better enforce existing law against online discrimination based on protected characteristics with respect to housing, access to credit, education, employment, and public accommodations; enforce unfair and deceptive practices in the data economy; and provide for algorithmic transparency and fairness in automated decisions.

Both Ms. Sohn and Professor Bedoya are exemplary nominees for their respective positions and should be swiftly confirmed. Throughout her career, Ms. Sohn has dedicated herself to the public interest, whether through her service on the Presidential Advisory Commission on the Public Interest Obligations of Digital Television Broadcasters, her advocacy for policies that promote diversity and competition in the non-profit sector, or her time at the FCC as a senior counselor to the chairman. An influential scholar focused on the principle that privacy is a civil right, Professor Bedoya is exactly the leader our country needs right now at the FTC to address the many issues relating to technology that marginalized communities face. He was notably one of the first to warn of the risks of facial recognition technology, including by comprehensively pointing out the technology's biases with race, gender, and age. The Leadership Conference also worked closely with Professor Bedoya in urging Google to ban online ads for predatory payday loans, which the company ultimately did.

Both nominees have shown they will establish a collaborative process and dialogue with the civil rights community as well as consult with the community members who are often left out of FCC and FTC deliberations, including people of color, people with disabilities, low-income communities, immigrants, incarcerated individuals, and other marginalized communities. In addition, both nominees would bring diversity to their respective institutions. If confirmed, Ms. Sohn would be the commission's first openly LGBTQ commissioner. As a naturalized citizen born in Peru, Professor Bedoya would be one of the few Latinos to serve as commissioner on the FTC.

Ms. Sohn and Professor Bedoya are highly qualified, possess deep knowledge of the challenges faced by disadvantaged populations, and have a demonstrated commitment to collaboration with civil rights stakeholders. The civil rights agenda at the FCC and FTC requires rapid, focused attention. For these reasons, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation should report these nominees favorably to the full Senate and the Senate should swiftly confirm them. Should you have any questions, please contact Leadership Conference Media/Telecommunications Task Force Co-Chair Cheryl Leanza, United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry, at cleanza@alhmail.com, or Anita Banerji, Leadership Conference Media/Tech Senior Program Director at banerji@civilrights.org or Bertram Lee, Jr., Media/Tech Counsel, at lee@civilrights.org.

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Sincerely,



Wade Henderson
Interim President and CEO



Janet Murguía
President and CEO, UnidosUS



Marc Morial
President and CEO, National Urban League