



UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME
THE LAW SCHOOL

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October 9, 2020

The Honorable Lindsey Graham, Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
290 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Diane Feinstein, Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Judge Amy Coney Barrett

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Feinstein,

In *Unfinished Business*, Anne-Marie Slaughter asks us to imagine a future world of genuine mutual support within families, between spouses, across communities, and at work. “Close your eyes and just imagine letting it all go—the expectations you imagine others have of you and that you have of yourself, your mate, and your house. Imagine that if your children call for your husband, partner, or any other loving adult in their lives, then you have the security of knowing that many different people can be there for them.”

I distinctly remember in January 2012 arriving to Notre Dame as a lateral law professor and thinking how relieved I was that I seemed to be successfully juggling an academic career while supporting my family and raising two great kids. But when I arrived at Notre Dame, I learned that successful professors with *large* families were surprisingly common. There were numerous families with four, five, six, and even seven children. And no one among the law faculty at Notre Dame managed to balance a large family and a successful career as well as Amy Coney Barrett.

A common question people ask about Amy Coney Barrett is “How does she *possibly* do it all?” I’m not sure of the answer, and I would never pretend to speak for her. But from my own personal perspective, I think the answer to that question is complicated. Much of the answer, of course, is about the exceptional qualities of Amy. She is brilliant, industrious, gracious, and kind. I have



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served on faculty committees with her, participated in countless faculty workshops with her, and watched her captivate an audience with her teaching. She is *always* prepared, *always* thoughtful, and *always* caring. It's a bit unnerving, to be honest. And yet that is the last thing Amy Coney Barrett would ever want you to do: compare yourself to her.

In Amy Coney Barrett's 2016 commencement speech to the law school graduates, I was an Associate Dean and had the good fortune to sit on the stage and observe the audience as Amy spoke on the importance of not comparing yourself to others. "There will be many, many good things, as well as some unexpected challenges. Throughout all of it, your joys will be so much sweeter and your burdens so much lighter if you embrace them as your own, without comparing your lot in life to anyone else's." The audience was mesmerized. I was too. I vowed to take her advice, and do my best to avoid comparing myself to others, including someone as successful as her.

But the personal qualities of Amy Coney Barrett are only part of the story of her success. I think another key part of her success is her incredibly supportive husband Jesse Barrett. Amy does not have to imagine a world in which her children will call for their father and she has the security of knowing that he will be there. That is her lived experience. If you talk to Trinity School parents, they will tell you that Jesse is in the carpool lane as often as Amy. It is common knowledge in South Bend and at Notre Dame that Amy and Jesse are mutually committed to raising their seven children together. At the White House ceremony announcing her Supreme Court nomination, Amy said that "I couldn't manage this full life without the unwavering support of my husband Jesse." That is literally true. He has adjusted his career plans to provide for their family, and promote her career. He deserves great credit for contributing to Amy's remarkable success.

I think a third key component of Amy's success is her community. She is surrounded by extended family, friends, neighbors, parishioners, and colleagues who love and support her. South Bend is a tight-knit community, and I personally know many people who are an integral part of her life. They support the Barrett family, and the Barrett family supports them. When Amy was nominated as the next Supreme Court Justice, within hours there were twenty-five different families who signed up to bring the Barrett family a meal throughout the confirmation process. Amy is able to successfully manage her career and family so well in part because she has a network of extended family, friends, neighbors, parishioners, and colleagues who are there to support her.

A final ingredient that facilitates Amy's remarkable success is her employer. Notre Dame is a remarkable place to work, and, regardless of what you read in the press, the university is filled with leaders who are caring, competent, and flexible. I know from personal experience that at Notre Dame Law School you are invited to bring your whole self to work. Everyone at work recognizes that our careers are only a part of who we are. Many employers do not understand the benefits of allowing employees to combine work and family. Notre Dame does, and the result is a work



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environment that promotes human flourishing. Amy Coney Barrett is the embodiment of human flourishing.

So imagine the pride we feel at Notre Dame Law School in watching one of our own reach the pinnacle of the legal profession. And imagine, after the ugly confirmation process is over, the inspiration that Justice Amy Coney Barrett will provide to millions of working women—to millions of busy families—who are trying to pursue the good life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Roger P. Alford".

Roger Alford
Professor of Law
Notre Dame Law School