



Chambers Of
Virginia A. Phillips
Chief United States District Judge

United States District Court
Central District Of California
United States Courthouse
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Los Angeles, California 90012-4565

Telephone
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October 29, 2019

Via Electronic and U.S. Mail

Mr. Pat Cipollone
White House Counsel
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chairman, Judiciary Committee
United States Senate
290 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member, Judiciary Committee
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kamala Harris
Member, Judiciary Committee
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Judicial Vacancies in the Central District of California

Dear Mr. Cipollone, Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Feinstein, and Senator Harris:

As Chief Judge of the Central District of California, one of the largest and busiest federal trial courts in the United States, I write to you about a crisis of unprecedented magnitude. Nearly one-third of our authorized judgeships sit vacant; some have been vacant for over five years. I implore the Senate to act on the nominations of the six men and women nominated for district judgeships here, the President to nominate candidates to fill the three additional vacancies, and the Senate, again, to act on those nominations without delay.

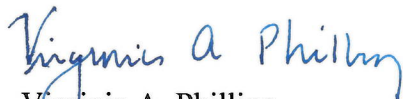
The Central District serves more than 19 million people, and is vast in size, covering seven counties in Southern California. To serve the people of our sprawling and populous district, Congress has authorized 28 judgeships, 27 permanent and one temporary. The Judicial Council of the United States repeatedly has recommended the creation of additional judicial positions (ten, in March 2019) based on the volume of cases filed here. In the five years since the last new judge joined our Court, the number of vacancies has climbed to an alarming high, while the caseload has increased more than twenty percent.

As a result, each of the active district judges on our Court has a weighted caseload of 986 civil cases – nearly double the national average. And this number does not include the criminal caseload carried by each judge, which in our district often includes cases of 50, 60 or even 90 indicted defendants. As alarming as this is, the situation may well worsen. Many of the active district judges on the Court who are eligible to retire continue to serve, despite the ever growing workload. If all of them chose to retire, only eleven active judges would remain, putting at grave risk our Court's ability to serve the millions of people in the Central District.

I am aware, of course, and appreciate that the President has nominated six candidates and announced his intent to nominate another two very soon. Three of those judicial nominees were renominated in February after their nominations in 2018 lapsed at the end of the Congressional term, and still no hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee on the nominations have been scheduled. Neither I nor anyone on our court intends to endorse a specific nominee or to encroach on the Senate's constitutional role of advice and consent. Rather, I write to draw your attention to the grave danger these vacancies pose to our Court's ability to serve justice in a timely and judicious manner.

Please contact me if I can give you any further information, and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Virginia A. Phillips
Chief United States District Judge

Cc: Honorable Sidney Thomas (*via Electronic Mail and U.S. Mail*)
Chief Judge, United States Court of Appeals
James C. Duff (*via Electronic Mail and U.S. Mail*)
Director