

Only with the benefit of such information will the Senate be able to exercise its constitutional advice and consent function in an informed and intelligent fashion.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Baucus of Montana.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR MAX BAUCUS

Senator BAUCUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to take this opportunity to address the nominee directly.

Judge O'Connor, this is a special occasion for each of us. It is our first Supreme Court nomination hearing, and I thought it would be fitting to use this short time to tell you how I personally feel about this nomination.

For you, as a judge, as a lawyer, as a citizen, as a woman, as a human being, it is a great personal tribute and a high honor to be nominated by the President of the United States to be an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court.

For me, this is a moment of special responsibility under the advise and consent powers given the Senate by article 2 of the Constitution, to determine whether your nomination should be confirmed. I view it as an important obligation to assure the American people that you are a nominee of the highest integrity and competence; that your view of the Constitution, your view of our form of government, and your view of the role of the Supreme Court are consistent with the best interests of our Nation.

For our country, it is our brief and only opportunity to examine an individual who will have profound impact on us, our children, and our grandchildren. Once confirmed, life tenure will give you the requisite independence to decide cases fairly and wisely, yet that tenure will also forever foreclose any opportunity to review your performance.

As a former State legislator who faced several moments of truth with Arizona voters, I am sure you appreciate the value of that kind of public accountability. In a sense, these hearings will be your last opportunity for public accountability. I hope you approach them in that light.

Finally, for our Nation this is one of those rare opportunities to examine the role of the Supreme Court and try to determine its proper relationship to the Congress, to the President, and to individual citizens.

I therefore believe that it is incumbent upon us, each of us, to be thoughtful, candid, and forthright, and to take the time to fully and completely exercise our obligations.

I will ask you about general principles you believe a judge should follow in deciding cases. I will ask you how you, as a member of the Court, would go about increasing our citizens' respect for the Su-