

Client	NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
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From: NAACP Legal Defense Fund
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ACTION ALERT

The fight for Debo is not over

Dear LDF Alums,

I'm sure that you are as outraged as I am by last week's vote in the United States Senate refusing to end cloture on the vote for Debo Adebile's confirmation to serve as Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. As you know, the opposition to Debo is part of a long-line of ugly campaigns mounted against former LDF attorneys seeking the top civil rights law enforcement position. If you haven't read my piece about this unfortunate history in The Root, [here's the link](#).

I want you to know that the fight is not over. The resistance to Debo based on LDF's representation of death row defendant Mumia Abu Jamal sends an ominous message to lawyers that providing pro bono representation to unpopular clients disqualifies us for service in the government or on the bench. The ongoing vitality of pro bono representation in capital cases is threatened by this effort to disqualify lawyers for government service based on the suspected deeds of their clients. Lawyers representing Guantanamo detainees, corporate defendants, polluters, defendants in employment discrimination cases and political prisoners could all be barred from government service in positions requiring confirmation, if the logic of last week's vote is extended. Across the profession, attorneys have expressed to us their outrage at this dangerous message.

Beginning this week we are seeking to elevate this conversation and change the narrative. One of our goals is to seek a re-vote for Debo. But that is only part of the strategy. Our larger goal is to use this opportunity to vindicate the work that we do, and to ensure that this kind of litmus test is never used again to deny a vote to a qualified nominee. Moreover, we must attempt to undo the damage of a vote that discourages young attorneys from volunteering their time and service to criminal defense work. Many prominent partners have agreed to join us in this effort.



You can help. We need you to use your influence and networks to keep this issue alive. We would very much like for each U.S. Senator, regardless of their vote, to hear from the bar association of their respective states. We're asking you to reach out to your state bar association and request that they send a letter on behalf of the state bar to their U.S. Senators expressing their views about debate surrounding the vote on Debo's confirmation. Contact your U.S. Senators. Applaud them if they vote in favor of cloture. Tell them how you feel if they didn't. It would be a great help if you would send "Letters to the editor" to your local newspaper when they run articles about this issue. We simply can't respond to all of the errors, mischaracterizations that appear in articles about this issue. If you would like talking points about LDF's involvement in the Mumia case or about the dangerous message that this vote sends to the legal profession, you may reach out to our D.C. office at 202-682-1300.

Thanks so much for your willingness to help. Below is a list of articles and sources you may wish to read about last week's vote.

All the best,

Sherrilyn A. Ifill
President and
Director-Counsel

Washington Post (Ruth Marcus) – [Senate vote on Debo "a travesty"](#)

Media Matters – ["FOX's Fact Free Attempt to Distinguish Between Debo and John Roberts"](#)

Slate – ["Guilt by Association"](#)

C-SPAN – [Video of Senator Tom Harkin's speech](#)