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Karen M. Richardson
Chicago, IL

March 29, 2021

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

The National Association of Women Lawyers (“NAWL”) congratulates you and Vice President Kamala Harris on your election and inauguration to the Presidency and Vice Presidency of the United States.

NAWL’s mission is to provide leadership, a collective voice, and essential resources to advance women in the legal profession and advocate for the equality of women under the law. Since 1899, NAWL has empowered women lawyers and cultivated a diverse membership dedicated to equity, mutual support, and collective success. Your Administration’s recent efforts to advance gender equality and equal rights have made it clear that our foundational principles in this area are aligned. NAWL is grateful to have an Administration prepared to address the needs of women.

To that end, NAWL would welcome the opportunity to serve as a resource to your Administration in its efforts to fight for women’s equality. NAWL enjoys a long-standing history as a respected proponent for the advancement of women lawyers and women’s equality under the law. NAWL is uniquely positioned to harness legal expertise and networks across the country and, through those resources, convene various and sometimes competing stakeholders to find practical solutions and reach collective consensus.

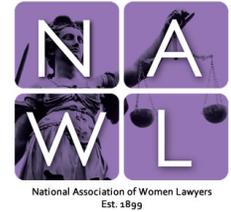
Additionally, as the Administration continues to develop policy that impacts our constituency, we call upon you to address several priorities critical to the advancement of women lawyers and women’s equality:

Judicial Appointments

We applaud your historic appointments of diverse leaders, women, and LGBT+ individuals to your cabinet and other senior posts. We were inspired by your appointment of Vanita Gupta to the role of Assistant Attorney General. In 2016, NAWL recognized Ms. Gupta for her professional achievement, positive influence, and valuable contribution to women in the law and in society by presenting her with NAWL’s Arabella Babb Mansfield Award. In the spirit of these appointments, we urge you to fulfill your campaign promise of appointing Black women to the federal judiciary, including the Supreme Court of the United States.

Gender Policy Council

We also applaud your Executive Order establishing a Gender Policy Council during Women’s History Month on International Women’s Day. The Council’s direct access to the White House is critical to collaboration on decisions that impact women. It is imperative that the Council remains fully funded and staffed for the duration of your term so that equitable policies remain at the forefront of the Administration’s agenda.



Reversing the Impact of COVID-19 on Women

We are grateful that one of your top priorities is reining in the COVID-19 pandemic. As your Administration is well-aware, those most impacted by the virus are women, especially women of color. The pandemic has presented issues of increased gender-based violence, food insecurity, job loss, and pay disparity, while it has highlighted the shortcomings in access to childcare and leave policies. As millions of American women struggle, many have been forced to give up on their own ambitions. In addition to slowing the spread of the virus, we ask that the Administration thoughtfully develop strategies to reverse the professional and economic losses women have suffered in the pandemic and implement policies designed to empower all women culturally, economically, politically, and socially long after the virus has abated.

Equal Rights Amendment

Finally, we call upon you to work with Congress to remove the Equal Rights Amendment's ratification deadline and urge the U.S. Archivist to include the Equal Rights Amendment as the 28th Amendment to the United States Constitution. NAWL was one of the first national organizations to endorse the ERA and was present for its first reading and presentation at the National Women's Conference in 1923. In 2020, Virginia became the 38th state to ratify the ERA since Congress proposed the amendment in 1972, pushing the ERA across the constitutional threshold for ratification. In sum, ratification of a constitutional prohibition against gender-based discrimination is long overdue.

Action from the White House supporting inclusion and justice for all is essential in amplifying the collective voice of people of all races, ethnicities, gender identities, and sexual orientations, and providing America with solutions to the issues we have faced since our nation's founding. As the oldest national bar association focused on women lawyers and equality for women, NAWL reiterates its offer to serve your Administration with NAWL's institutional knowledge and resources on the issues impacting our constituents.

We are committed to serving with you to address this critical agenda. Your success in the Office of the President is all Americans' success.

Congratulations and best wishes,



Karen M. Richardson
Executive Director

cc:

Office of the Vice President
Office of Counsel to the President and Vice President
Gender Equity Council Co-Chairs Jennifer Klein and Julissa Reynoso
Ambassador Susan Rice, Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy