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Claiborne Pell

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Mari Jo Buhle, Ph.D.
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MacArthur Fellow, 1991-1996
Department of American Civilization
Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island  02912

Dear Professor Buhle:

Thank you very much for your recent letter regarding Carol Iannone’s nomination to the National Council on the Humanities and the nomination of Judge Clarence Thomas to become an Associate Justice on the United States Supreme Court.

As you may know, the Committee on Labor and Human Resources met on July 17 week and denied approval of the Iannone nomination by a vote of 9 to 8. I joined in opposing Ms. Iannone’s confirmation, and I appreciate knowing of your support for my position.

While there was an outpouring of strong feelings on both sides of this debate, I believe that I did what was best for the future of the Humanities Endowment. A copy of the statement I made before voting is enclosed.

The Senate is just beginning the process of reviewing Judge Thomas’s qualifications. The nomination, however, has already sparked vigorous and passionate comment from supporters and critics alike among judicial scholars, the media, and the general public. This is altogether appropriate for a Supreme Court nominee, as the importance of having qualified jurists who both respect and honor the letter and spirit of the Constitution cannot be overstated. Formal hearings on the nomination are scheduled to begin on September 10.

I appreciate knowing of your concerns on this matter, and I will be sure to keep your views in mind when making the decision to either support or oppose the Thomas nomination.

Warm regards.

Ever sincerely,

Claiborne Pell
Chair
Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities