

November 14, 2023



SUPPORT THE CONFIRMATION OF SARA HILL TO THE U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OKLAHOMA

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 240 national organizations committed to promoting and protecting the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, we write to express our strong support for the confirmation of Sara Hill to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma. The Leadership Conference intends to include your position on the confirmation of Ms. Hill in our voting record for the 118th Congress.

Ms. Hill will be a great addition to the federal bench. Currently, she is the principal for Hill Law, PLLC, where she works with the attorney general of the Cherokee Nation on various legal matters. Ms. Hill also currently serves as an at-large voting member of the U.S. Sentencing Commission's Tribal Issues Advisory Group. Prior to this, she held several positions within the Cherokee Nation, including attorney general, secretary of natural resources, deputy attorney general, and assistant attorney general. She also spent a year as special assistant to the United States Attorney for the Northern District of Oklahoma. Ms. Hill is a graduate of Northeastern State University and the University of Tulsa College of Law. Her experience and exceptional career would be a tremendous asset to the Northern District of Oklahoma.

Ms. Hill's entire career has been spent in service of the Cherokee Nation, and her depth and breadth of experience in Indian law is unique and greatly needed on our federal courts. During her years as a prosecutor for the Cherokee Nation District Court, she focused mainly on child welfare proceedings and environmental litigation. In 2015, she was appointed to serve as the Cherokee Nation's secretary of natural resources, where she supervised the tribe's environmental litigation. In this role, she successfully brought suit against a uranium conversion facility after they failed to properly dispose of nearly 10,000 tons of radioactive material that threatened the contamination of the Illinois and Arkansas Rivers.¹

In 2019, Ms. Hill became the attorney general for the Cherokee Nation. Throughout her tenure, she oversaw all litigation to which the Cherokee Nation was a party, which included several important Indian law cases that went to the U.S. Supreme Court. Notable among them was the recent case, *Haaland v. Brackeen*, upholding the constitutionality of the Indian Child Welfare Act — a 1978 law enacted to address the alarmingly high rates of removal of Native American children from their tribes.² Additionally, Ms. Hill also played a crucial role in the legislative

¹ *Oklahoma and Cherokee Nation v. Sequoyah Fuels Corp.*, CV-2017-23 (Sequoyah Cnty. Dist. Ct. Dec. 6, 2018).

² *Haaland v. Brackeen*, 599 U.S. 255, 143 S. Ct. 1609, 216 L. Ed. 2d 254 (2023).

drafting and lobbying for the eventual passage by the U.S. Congress of the Stigler Act Amendments of 2018, which removed language from a 1947 federal law that limited the ownership of allotted tribal land to those with at least one half blood quantum requirement of one of the Five Tribes.³ This requirement previously accelerated tribal land loss because those without the required blood status were unable to inherit the restricted land allotted to tribes.⁴ This expansive and impressive record protecting and defending the rights of tribal nations makes Ms. Hill eminently qualified for this position.

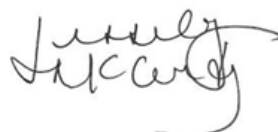
In addition to the professional experience that Ms. Hill would bring to this role, she would also bring important lived experiences to the federal bench. If confirmed, Ms. Hill — who is a Cherokee citizen — would be the first Native American woman to ever serve a lifetime appointment on any federal district court in Oklahoma.⁵ Further, she would be only the eighth Native American person to ever serve as an Article III judge in our nation’s history.⁶ Public trust in the judiciary is vital to its function, and that trust is strengthened when the composition of our courts reflects the communities that they serve.⁷ This personal and professional diversity of experience also improves judicial decision-making.⁸ The confirmation of Ms. Hill is a necessary step towards ensuring that our federal courts reflect and represent the diversity of our nation.

Ms. Hill is an excellent choice for this position, and we strongly urge the Senate to confirm her to the Northern District of Oklahoma. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Lena Zwarenstejn, senior director of the fair courts program, at (202) 466-3311. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Maya Wiley
President & CEO



Jesselyn McCurdy
Executive Vice President of Government Affairs

³ Stigler Act Amendments of 2018, PL 115–399 (December 31, 2018).

⁴ Melissa Scavelli, [Stigler Act Amendments signed into law, Cherokee nation celebrates](#), KOKH (January 3, 2019).

⁵ [Biographical Directory of Article III Federal Judges, 1789-present](#), FEDERAL JUDICIAL CENTER (Accessed November 2023).

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Maya Sen, [Diversity, Qualifications, and Ideology: How Female and Minority Judges Have Changed, or Not Changed, Over Time](#), 2017 WIS. L. REV. 367 (2017).

⁸ Kate Berry, [Building a Diverse Bench: Selecting Federal Magistrate and Bankruptcy Judges](#), BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE AT NYU SCHOOL OF LAW AND AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION JUDICIAL DIVISION (2017).