

Statement for the Record by Senator Jeanne Shaheen
Remarks in Support of Nomination of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson for
Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States
April 7, 2022

Mrs. SHAHEEN: Mr. President, it gives me tremendous honor and pride to offer remarks in recognition of this truly historic moment. I was first elected to the Senate in 2008 and came to Washington alongside our nation's first African American president. I remember the aura of historical significance that permeated the whole country during those early days of the Obama Administration. In particular, I remember the awe and joy surrounding the Inauguration – with Americans lining our streets, packed on the National Mall and glued to television screens in New Hampshire and across our country. I have thought a lot about this recently because I see that same excitement, anticipation and recognition of history unfolding before our eyes as we as a nation are on the cusp of elevating our first female African American justice to the highest court in our land.

Our Constitution has served as a model for modern democracies around the world. Important pillars of our society like equality under the law, freedom of speech, press, and religion and the separation of powers are all innovations that have made America a beacon of democracy around the world. What makes our Constitution particularly exceptional is its ability to be adjusted and adapted to more faithfully reflect the interests and values of our diverse citizenry which it serves. Important amendments have expanded rights for women and communities of color – making our society more inclusive and pushing the needle toward justice. The Constitution guards our basic rights and freedoms, and the Justices of the Supreme Court serve as the guardians of that Constitution.

It is precisely because of the importance of this Court, and each of its nine precious seats, that the seating of a new Justice is such a momentous occasion. And in this instance, the significance of the moment has been met by a singular nominee whose achievements, experience and integrity are fully worthy of the history books. In addition, for the first time in history, a former public defender will soon serve on the highest court in the land. Judge Jackson has already – truly – rendered outstanding service to her country.

Judge Jackson's lived experiences as a Black woman and a mother will bring essential insights to the Supreme Court, which for the first time in 232 years, will approach gender parity. While I fully believe Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg would have loved seeing Justice Jackson ascend to her beloved Court – we still have a long way to go before we get to Justice Ginsburg's vision of nine female justices! But one step at a time, we are building a better, more inclusive country. More succinctly put: we are building democratic institutions that represent the public they serve. Justice Jackson will make history and bring the full bounty of her rich and diverse personal history to the Court – just as Louis Brandeis, Thurgood Marshall, Sandra Day O'Connor and Sonia Sotomayor did before her.

I'll end with one last reflection: Judge Jackson's historic nomination offers hope and optimism at a time when partisanship and division threaten to unravel our very democracy. During my conversation with her, I was struck by her genuine candor in discussing how she would approach working with other justices from different ideological backgrounds. She seeks to appeal to shared experiences and values with justices whose ideological backgrounds differ from her own. This recognition that we all have more that unites than divides us gives me faith not only in Judge Jackson's ability to forge consensus – but also that we as a nation have a brighter future ahead of us than behind us, and that we can, and must, work together to bridge our divides – ideological and otherwise.

If I can paraphrase a fellow Granite Stater, the great Senator Daniel Webster whose desk I occupy today: “Justice is what binds civilized nations together.” And I believe that Judge Jackson will faithfully use her seat on the Supreme Court to deliver just that kind of justice. Judge Jackson is the very best of America, and I am honored and excited to cast my vote to confirm her to the Supreme Court of the United States.