



March 8, 2021

United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Grassley, and Committee Members:

On behalf of our 1.5 million supporters nationwide, People For the American Way urges the Senate to confirm Vanita Gupta as the next associate attorney general of the United States. The Justice Department's mission is "to ensure fair and impartial administration of justice for all." As an experienced civil rights attorney and advocate and a former Civil Rights Division chief, Ms. Gupta will serve with distinction in ensuring that DOJ lives up to its founding ideals.

March 7 marked the 56th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, when a peaceful voting rights march in Selma, Alabama, led by a young John Lewis, was beaten back across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. While the Voting Rights Act followed just months later, the fight to ensure that all eligible voters can cast a ballot that counts continues today. Ms. Gupta's commitment to that fight is well-documented. She persisted under the constraints imposed by *Shelby County v. Holder* and engaged in aggressive voting rights enforcement during her previous DOJ tenure. Her work as Division chief also included criminal justice reform, LGBTQ+ and disability rights, prosecuting hate crimes, and fighting discrimination in education, housing, lending, and employment.

Ms. Gupta's service in the private sector further supports her confirmation. At the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, she led a successful effort to overturn 38 wrongful drug convictions in Tulia, Texas, and the former defendants were subsequently pardoned. At the American Civil Liberties Union, she oversaw criminal justice reform as deputy legal director and led both the Center for Justice and the Smart Justice Campaign. Upon leaving DOJ in 2017, a perilous time for civil and human rights in America, she became president and chief executive officer of the 200-member strong Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights coalition. When President-elect Biden announced his intent to nominate Ms. Gupta, the Leadership Conference board chairs applauded her expansion of their "capacity to lead major national campaigns around voting rights, the 2020 Census, federal courts, justice reform and police accountability, among other priorities."

If confirmed, Ms. Gupta would be the first woman of color in U.S. history to serve as associate attorney general and the first civil rights lawyer to serve in one of the top three DOJ leadership positions. She is the type of leader that the Department needs in this

moment, and she is eminently qualified for the position. People For the American Way urges you to cast your vote “yea” in favor of the Gupta nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marge Baker". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Marge Baker
Executive Vice President for Policy and Program