



## THE FLORIDA SENATE

### SENATE DEMOCRATIC OFFICE

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**AUDREY GIBSON**  
*Minority Leader*

December 11, 2018

The Honorable Ron DeSantis  
Governor-elect, State of Florida  
Transition Office, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor, The Capitol  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor-elect DeSantis,

For the first time in almost 40 years, Florida's highest court stands at the threshold of reversing a legacy first established by former Governor Rubin Askew when he appointed Joseph W. Hatchett to fill a vacancy on the state Supreme Court. Justice Hatchett was the first African American to ascend to that position in Florida's history, a testament to Governor Askew's unwavering commitment to integration and equal justice. His judgement was overwhelmingly confirmed when Justice Hatchett won election in 1976.

The historical appointment by Governor Askew stands in stark contrast to where we find ourselves today. With three upcoming vacancies on the Supreme Court, only 11 names out of a possible 18 have been submitted by the Judicial Nominating Commission. Not one is African American, despite six qualified African Americans having applied. This continues an appalling lack of diversity in judicial appointments made during your predecessor's tenure as there has not been a single African American judge among Governor Scott's 32 appointments to Florida's five appellate courts.

You have an opportunity to correct this stark imbalance as you have the power to insist on a full complement of 18 candidates to be considered. We are requesting that you do so.

The governor of the third largest state in the Union represents all Floridians, including 3.5 million African American residents and many others who understand the critical importance of diversity, judicial integrity, and impartiality.

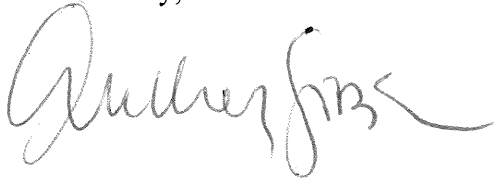
Surely, the qualities you cited as guiding your "team" selection process, namely those who will "respect our Constitution and the rule of law and serve our state with distinction" are not uniquely found in just one group or one ethnicity or one race. They can be found in all groups, all ethnicities and all races – if one takes the time to look. Justice Hatchett, and later, Chief

Governor-elect Ron DeSantis  
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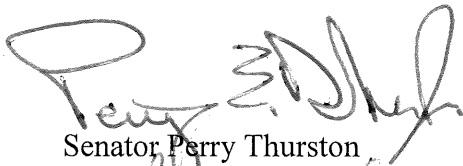
Justice Leander Shaw, Justice Peggy Quince and Justice E.C. Perry, brought all of these qualities and more as they each served our state with distinction.

The state Supreme Court stands as the final arbiter in questions affecting all of our lives and it should reflect the faces of all those seeking its judgement. Your action to ensure this happens would be appreciated.

Sincerely,



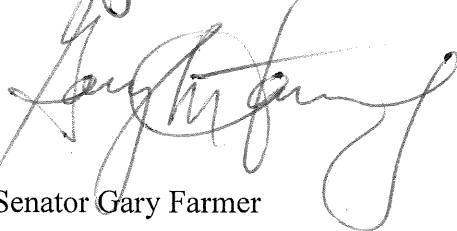
Senator Audrey Gibson  
Senate Democratic Leader



Senator Perry Thurston



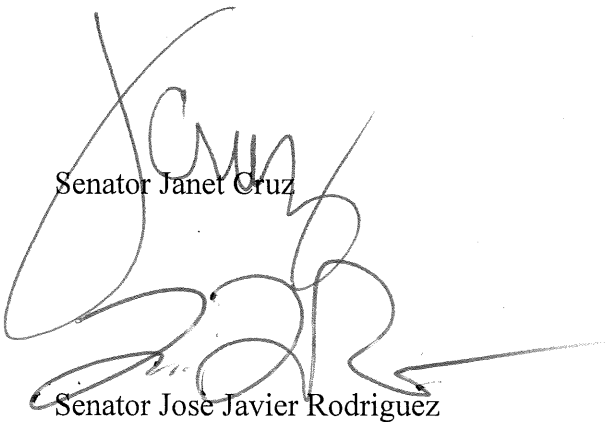
Senator Annette Taddeo



Senator Gary Farmer



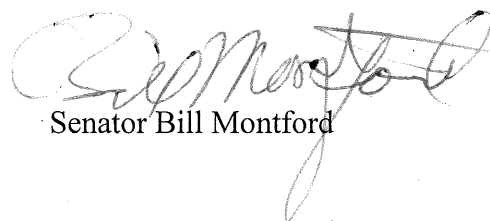
Senator Lori Berman



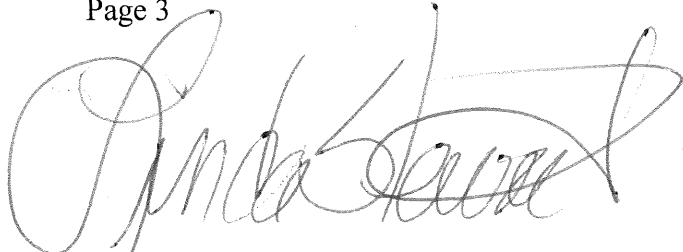
Senator Janet Cruz



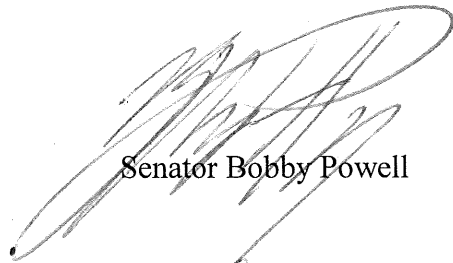
Senator Victor Torres



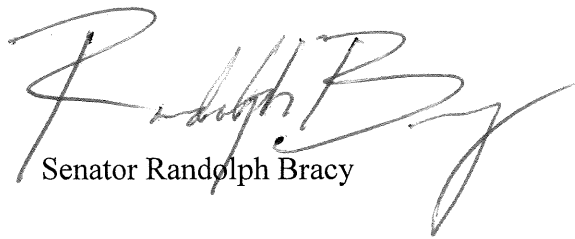
Senator Bill Montford



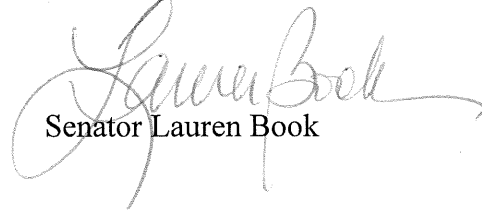
Senator Linda Stewart



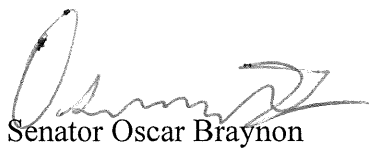
Senator Bobby Powell



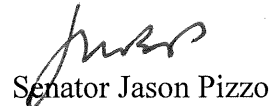
Senator Randolph Bracy



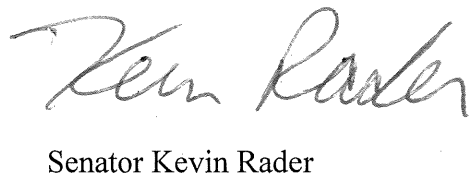
Senator Lauren Book



Senator Oscar Braynon



Senator Jason Pizzo



Senator Kevin Rader



Senator Darryl Rouson