



November 16, 2021

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**SUPPORT SWIFT CONFIRMATION OF ROSENWORCEL, SOHN TO FEDERAL  
COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

Senator Maria Cantwell

Chair

U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Roger Wicker

Ranking Member

U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 230 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, and the undersigned organizations, we write to convey our strong support for the nominations of Jessica Rosenworcel and Gigi B. Sohn to serve as chair and commissioner, respectively, of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). We urge the committee to report the nominations to the full Senate favorably and promptly. At a time when access to reliable, diverse news and information, as well as affordable broadband and communications, is paramount, a fully staffed FCC is a top priority for the nation and for the constituencies we represent. Both Ms. Rosenworcel and Ms. Sohn are exemplary nominees for their respective positions and should be swiftly confirmed.

Universal and affordable access to telecommunications services and diverse media enables vital communications with family, friends, and employers; provides access to invaluable health information, emergency services, social services, and education; and promotes participation in our 21st century democracy and economy. Our coalition is committed to ensuring that media and telecommunications policy affirms and extends our nation's longstanding commitment to civil rights.

Ms. Rosenworcel's direct experience with the commission, which includes nine years at the agency, and most recently as acting chair, demonstrates she is particularly well-positioned to lead the FCC at this pivotal time. Under her leadership, the FCC successfully implemented several time-sensitive and nationally important programs to address the COVID-19 pandemic, including the Emergency Broadband Benefit, which offers monthly financial

support to low-income households. Throughout her career, Ms. Sohn has dedicated herself to the public interest, whether through her service on the Presidential Advisory Commission on the Public Interest Obligations of Digital Television Broadcasters, her advocacy for policies that promote diversity and competition in the non-profit sector, or her time at the FCC as a senior counselor to the chairman.

Both nominees have shown they will establish a collaborative process and dialogue with the civil rights community as well as consult with the community members who are often left out of commission deliberations, including people of color, people with disabilities, low-income communities, incarcerated individuals, and other marginalized communities. In addition, both nominees would bring diversity to the commission. If confirmed, Ms. Rosenworcel would be the FCC's first permanent female chair and Ms. Sohn would be the commission's first openly LGBTQ commissioner.

Without confirmation of both nominees to these positions this year, the FCC will be left with only three commissioners. The need for swift action on these nominations is therefore critical. After nine months without a working majority, the FCC has a significant workload before it. The civil rights agenda at the FCC requires rapid, focused attention. Congress has now adopted the Affordable Connectivity Program, an improved, permanent version of the Emergency Broadband Benefit, and the commission will need to move quickly to implement this program and ensure that all the commission's programs for low-income people are more effective and easier for their beneficiaries to use. Other civil rights priorities include finishing the congressionally mandated 2018 Quadrennial Review this year; completing the next review that will start immediately in 2022; implementing Congress' directive to collect equal employment opportunity data in this sector; and a long-delayed proceeding addressing the dysfunctional market and unjust practices in incarcerated communications.

There is a tremendous overlap between media and telecommunications policies and civil rights, and the FCC's leaders must apply that understanding in setting the commission's agenda. To that end, we urge the committee to discuss with the nominees the importance of placing civil rights at the center of the commission's agenda and to press them to create an Office of Civil Rights to ensure every aspect of the agency's docket is consistent with our nation's highest values. Moreover, the FCC is in a unique position to address privacy in the industries it oversees. Processing of personal data should promote equity and justice as it enhances safety, economic opportunity, and convenience for all.

Ms. Rosenworcel and Ms. Sohn are highly qualified, possess deep knowledge of the challenges faced by disadvantaged populations, and have a demonstrated commitment to collaboration with civil rights stakeholders. For these reasons, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation should move quickly to report these nominees favorably to the full Senate. Should you have any questions, please contact Leadership Conference Media/Telecommunications Task Force Co-Chair Cheryl Leanza, United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry, at [cleanza@alhmail.com](mailto:cleanza@alhmail.com) or Bertram Lee, Jr., media/tech counsel, at [lee@civilrights.org](mailto:lee@civilrights.org).

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

A. Philip Randolph Institute

AFL-CIO

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

American Federation of Teachers

Andrew Goodman Foundation, Inc.

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC

Center for Disability Rights

Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

Communications Workers of America

Crescent City Media Group

Equality California

Feminist Majority Foundation

Hispanic Federation

Japanese American Citizens League

League of Conservation Voters

MediaJustice

National Black Justice Coalition

National Council of Asian Pacific Americans

National Fair Housing Alliance

Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)

Public Citizen

Silver State Equality-Nevada

Southern Echo Inc.

The Trevor Project

United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry