

The CHAIRMAN. Gentlemen, have you decided who should go next? Otherwise, we will go in seniority before this committee. Johnny, you go ahead. You have testified before this committee more than anybody. Or do you want—you all figure out how the devil you want to go; otherwise, I am just going to pick somebody and you are going to go.

Mr. PEED. I will go first.

The CHAIRMAN. All right.

I have been informed by my senior colleague to get you to watch the light. You all are very familiar with green and amber and red lights. When the red light comes on, as he has informed me to tell you, please stop.

STATEMENT OF CARL R. PEED

Mr. PEED. Mr. Chairman and members, good morning. It is a distinct honor and privilege to come before you this morning to share with you the reasons why the National Sheriffs' Association wholeheartedly supports the nomination of Judge Clarence Thomas for the U.S. Supreme Court.

I am Carl Peed, sheriff of Fairfax County, VA, and I am speaking on behalf of Sheriff Marshall Honaker of Bristol, VA, who is president of the National Sheriffs' Association. I am a long-time National Sheriffs' associate with membership on the law and legislative committee, the detention and corrections committee, and the accreditation committee. I am a career law enforcement professional with over 17 years' experience with the Fairfax County sheriff's office. I have the honor of coming from a family of law enforcement officers. My father was a deputy sheriff in North Carolina who was shot in the line of duty, and my brother was a police officer in Virginia.

The National Sheriffs' Association was established in 1940, representing the Nation's sheriffs, deputy sheriffs, police executives, corrections professionals, and other criminal justice officials. The National Sheriffs' Association has over 25,000 members and represented 3,096 sheriffs in this country. Because of my background in law enforcement and because of the concerns of the association's members, I am especially grateful for the opportunity to address you today.

As the drug war rages on and law enforcement officers continue to struggle with the rising tide of violent crime nationwide, we need an experienced Associate Justice with the qualifications of Judge Thomas.

Throughout his career, Judge Thomas has preserved his personal integrity, honesty, and principles, maintaining these qualities in the face of discrimination, bigotry, and political rivalry. His appointment to the Supreme Court will provide an experienced, just voice on the fundamental issues plaguing this Nation today. President Bush has thoughtfully chosen a demonstrated leader who will make a difference.

The National Sheriffs' Association surveyed its membership regarding Judge Thomas' nomination. Sheriff Robert C. Rufo, an active member from Massachusetts, a member of the National Sheriffs' Association, said, "Judge Thomas brings an exemplary

educational background and diverse legal experience to the bench. Additionally, he appears to possess the humanistic qualities critical to the issues before the Nation's highest Court." Along with Sheriff Rufo's comments, NSA headquarters received comment after comment filled with praise from sheriffs across this country regarding Judge Thomas. They spoke of Judge Thomas as a "person of the highest caliber," "an anti-crime person," "a judge who recognizes the tough job facing law enforcement professionals today." Those who know him and those who read of his credentials are equally enthusiastic about his appointment. Our Nation's sheriffs shoulder their position of responsibility in the criminal justice system with pride. They fully recognize Judge Thomas' acknowledged talents and qualifications. Frankly, we need and we want Judge Thomas and what he has to offer our entire criminal justice system.

It is our definite belief that he will approach the cases that come before the Court with a commitment to deciding them fairly, as the facts, the law, and his oath dictate.

Never in our Nation's history have we needed more desperately to add to our highest judicial body a totally fair, impartial, brilliant Associate Justice. Unquestionably, now is the hour for this man. He has our admiration and our respect.

On behalf of your Nation's sheriffs and the National Sheriffs' Association, let me urge you to proceed with all due haste to see that Judge Thomas is seated on that Bench.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Peed follows:]