

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.
Ms. Bryant.

STATEMENT OF ANNE BRYANT

Ms. BRYANT. Thank you, Chairman Biden, and good morning to other members of the committee. I am Anne Bryant, executive director of the American Association of University Women—as many of you know—135,000 members strong in 1,800 communities, working for education and equity for women and girls, recently focusing on the whole issue of girls in education but historically working on reproductive freedom, civil rights, and workplace discrimination. I have submitted written testimony. You will be grateful to know I am not going to use it, and what I am going to say is shorter.

The CHAIRMAN. The entire statement will be placed in the record.

Ms. BRYANT. Thank you.

It is because of AAUW's deep concern for education and equity issues that I am here today. We are very disturbed by Judge Thomas' record, and we understand that you have a tough choice before you. You can decide to make this choice based on his writings, his track record, his action, or on 5 days of testimony when he, in many cases, reversed what many of those opinions were.

Over the past several days, I have been struck—as I have a feeling some of you have been—with the great contrast between those who have come before you to oppose him and those who have come before you to praise him. I have noticed, as you may have, that those who have come to oppose him have brought careful documentation, have used cases, articles, speeches. Those who have come to praise him have much more often used childhood stories, personal character traits. I will read some of them.

Judge Gibbons called him receptive to persuasion. "Open-minded" said Sister Reidy. Dean Calabresi, who spoke for him, ended his testimony by saying that there was a significant chance that Clarence Thomas would be a powerful figure in the defense of civil rights. But at the end he said, "However, I am not confident of that." But the phrase he used in talking about the youth of Judge Thomas was that he believed he had a significant chance for growth.

A chance for growth? Is the Supreme Court of our land going to be a training program?

So we have learned about Clarence Thomas, the man. We have actually learned a lot about Clarence Thomas, the politician. But the question before us is Clarence Thomas, the jurist.

Patricia King so eloquently said last Tuesday that the issue is not one person's individual struggle. Actually the issue is what Clarence Thomas will do on the Supreme Court for others' struggles. The major principle in this great democracy is the principle of equal opportunity; that inalienable right, in fact, that we are in this country to ensure equal opportunity for all people, which in essence is making sure that all Americans have greater odds of success.

It is becoming increasingly clear, too, that equal opportunity is not just a principle of justice. It is an economic and social necessity

when 80 percent of the entering work force are women and minorities by the year 2000.

Does Judge Thomas understand that equal opportunity in the workplace means holding businesses accountable for providing a climate which is open, accepting of all cultures, nurturing of disparate talents? Has Clarence Thomas demonstrated at EEOC that he would enforce the laws of this land which reward businesses for reaching out to those different populations, punishing those who do not, but, most importantly, protecting the rights of individuals who are treated in a discriminatory way? Does he understand the right and the responsibility of the Court to protect these individuals?

The American Association of University Women fears he does not. And what about equal opportunity in education? Does Clarence Thomas, who himself received an excellent and selective education, understand that to develop a vibrant educational system for all of our children has huge obstacles? Does Judge Thomas understand the critical role the Court will have to play to ensure that public education survives and flourishes in the future? Does he understand how quickly our Nation's public schools could decline even further if precious resources were funneled off to private and religious schools through tax credit and tuition voucher systems?

From his actions and his words and his record, the American Association of University Women fears he does not understand this.

One of the fundamental tenets of a democracy, stated in the Constitution, protected by the Supreme Court, is the separate of church and state. Throughout all of AAUW's long history, our members have found for that principle.

Does Clarence Thomas understand the long-term effects of allowing a simple Christian prayer, seemingly harmless, at the beginning of every school day? Does he feel the discomfort, the insecurity that a Jewish, Muslim, or Buddhist child has when forced, even by peer pressure, to join in or listen to words she doesn't believe?

The American Association of University Women fears that Judge Thomas would rather legislate morality than protect religious freedom.

You do have a tough decision to make, and with tough decisions you have got to weigh the evidence, the facts and Judge Thomas' record. We believe that Judge Thomas' actions speak louder than his recent words. If you vote against this confirmation, it will be another battle for the next nominee. We know that. If you confirm him, will the battles that you have to fight in Congress to protect equal opportunity, individual rights, privacy, and religious freedom be even longer and tougher?

The eyes of the American Association of University Women are on the future, and we think all Americans deserve a better future than is promised by putting Clarence Thomas on the Supreme Court.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bryant follows:]