



January 22, 2003

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch, Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Room 224
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Hatch:

On behalf of Access to Independence of Cortland County, I write respectfully to urge you to use your conscience and good judgment not to confirm Jeffrey Sutton to the Sixth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. As a long-time proponent of the millions of persons with disabilities and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you must recognize that Jeffrey Sutton's activist efforts to limit Congressional authority in the area of disability rights has undermined the legislative role in making and championing the ADA and other laws removing barriers for the more than 50 million children and adults with disabilities and their families in the United States.

In *University of Alabama v. Garrett*, Mr. Sutton argued successfully that Congress did not have the authority under the Constitution to apply the ADA to States in employment discrimination suits for damages. In this case you filed an amicus brief supporting the constitutionality of the ADA as applied to State employers. Why, then, confirm someone to a lifetime appointment to a federal appeals court whose federalist view of the Constitution will erect new barriers for Americans with disabilities seeking to assert their rights in federal court?

He argued unsuccessfully that unnecessary institutionalization should not be a violation of the ADA in the *Olmstead v. L.C.* case. Mr. Sutton's positions in these and other cases represent a view of Congress's authority under the Equal Protection Clause, Spending Clause, and Commerce Clause that would dramatically restrict your ability to pass laws protecting the rights of Americans with disabilities, older workers, and others under the Constitution.

Mr. Chairman, you have been a long-time supporter of federal civil rights for Americans with disabilities. Working with Senators Dole, Kennedy, Harkin and others, you helped build the overwhelming documentation of discrimination that persuaded your colleagues to support the ADA when it was enacted in 1990.

Resources & Advocacy for People with Disabilities

37 Church St., Cortland, NY 13045 ph: 607-753-7363 tty: 607-753-7363 fax: 607-756-4884 email: access@odyssey.net

Access to Independence joins hundreds of non-partisan national, state and local disability organizations to oppose his appointment, including many from his home State of Ohio. It is unprecedented for our community to speak out so loudly in opposition to a judicial nominee, and we do so because we are convinced that his extreme views represent a real threat to our civil rights.

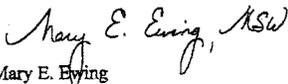
Please honor your commitment to a strong ADA and refrain from confirming Mr. Sutton to a federal judgeship. Please listen to the strong protests of your constituents with disabilities and their families and colleagues and confirm candidates who understand the importance of Congress's ability to remedy this nation's abysmal history of exclusion, segregation, sterilization, institutionalization and impoverishment of its citizens with disabilities.

Mr. Sutton's defenders have argued that his positions in Garrett, Olmstead, and other cases do not necessarily reflect his views, but that as a former Solicitor for the State of Ohio he was merely robustly asserting a defense of State immunity under the 11th Amendment of the Constitution. But if Mr. Sutton's view of State immunity under the ADA is the necessary position for a State attorney general to assert, why in the Garrett case was his position on behalf of the University of Alabama opposed by a bipartisan group of 14 State attorneys general, and supported by only six in addition to Alabama? As the amicus brief on behalf of 14 states in Garrett explained in reference to the ADA, "to eradicate the effects of the extensively documented, long-term, pervasive and invidious discrimination against people with disabilities, it is critical that the States be leaders in facilitating this duly enacted Section 5 legislation."

Mr. Chairman, we need your leadership to help us stem a tide of activist court decisions that are weakening the Constitutional underpinnings of disability rights laws and threatening your ability as a United States Senator to enact legislation establishing the full range of remedies to address discrimination on the basis of disability.

As a leader in activist attacks legislative power, Jeffrey Sutton does not deserve your support.

Sincerely yours,


Mary E. Ewing

Executive Director

Access to Independence of Cortland County, Inc.