PLG ALERT 9/21/2005

The Progressive Librarians Guild Opposes Roberts’ Confirmation

After listening to several days of testimony from Judge John Roberts, we must oppose his confirmation as Chief Justice to the Supreme Court. His testimony has been inadequate and his record disturbing. Additionally, as librarians who believe that democracy is best served with full and open access to government information, we are deeply disturbed that Judge Roberts and the White House have refused to provide the Senate Judiciary Committee with key documents that would have provided a deeper understanding of the judge’s worthiness to become a member of the Supreme Court.

Judge Roberts has been evasive on the issues of equality, the right to privacy and women’s reproductive rights. His published writings on enforcement of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 demonstrate an unwillingness to work for protections for all people who live in the United States. He has argued that the Constitution permits religious ceremonies in public schools, and that environmentalists cannot sue for enforcement of the Endangered Species Act. In 1991, writing on behalf of the government in a case on federal funding of health programs, Roberts stated, “We continue to believe that Roe v. Wade was wrongly decided and should be overruled.”

Additionally, Judge Roberts’ refusal to recuse himself this past summer from the hearing of Hamdan v. Rumsfeld – at the very time he was being interviewed by the Bush administration for Supreme Court nomination – speaks volumes of his judicial integrity.

Appointment as a Supreme Court justice is a lifelong position and deserves not only intense examination by members of the Judiciary Committee and outside witnesses, but also a willingness on the part of the nominee to be open and forthcoming when questioned. Judge Roberts’ guarded responses, coupled with White House refusal to release key documents from Roberts’ tenure as principal deputy solicitor general under President George H. W. Bush makes this examination difficult.

The Progressive Librarians Guild has little confidence that Judge John Roberts will protect the United States Constitution or the rights of women,
minorities and citizens generally. We urge members of the Senate who support Voting Rights Act of 1965, women’s equality, the preservation of women’s reproductive rights and democracy itself to vote no on Judge Roberts’ confirmation.

Approved by the Coordinating Committee of the Progressive Librarians Guild, September 21, 2005