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July 20, 2004

Mr. Ed Gillespie, Chairman
Republican National Committee
310 First Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003

Mr. Terry McAuliffe, Chairman
Democratic National Committee
430 South Capital Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Chairmen Gillespie and McAuliffe:

This year's presidential election gives all of us the opportunity to show the nations of the world our democracy working at its best. We know also that many Americans believe this election to be one of the most important in generations. We write to ask you to help make this campaign season one of our nation's proudest moments.

Because of the gravity of the issues confronting voters, we hope the major parties – the world's preeminent political institutions – will agree to focus on a discussion of those issues and not resort to name-calling and finger-pointing or use convenient scapegoats to scare the public. To do so would demean the process, and the voters. This is particularly true when these efforts are broadly directed at lawyers or judges. Ours is a nation founded upon a deep respect for the rule of law. As we work to help this model take root in fledgling democracies around the world, we should also demonstrate our respect for officers of our courts, and our respect for the three branches of government on which our nation stands.

America's lawyers and judges come from all walks of life, serve in communities of all sorts, and represent all political views. Their interests and priorities lie not in partisanship or power, but in the pursuit of justice and the challenge of ensuring that every inhabitant of this great land enjoys the liberties and opportunities to which they are entitled. They are part of the reason our legal system and our judiciary are models emulated the world over.

This is a time for all of us to work together here and abroad to help emerging democracies build societies based on the rule of law – societies that protect the rights of all of their citizens – so we can defend liberty and pursue justice around the world. America's lawyers and judges are doing their part. In the last few years alone, hundreds of them have devoted their time to promoting democracy and the rule of law in Iraq, Afghanistan and beyond.

Chairmen Gillespie and McAuliffe

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Healthy and honest debate on policies and priorities is the foundation of any functioning democracy. We at the American Bar Association recognize this and are deeply proud of the work lawyers do every day to facilitate and participate in precisely this sort of discourse. We recognize that campaign debate may involve our court systems, judges or the legal profession. For the role of lawyers and judges to be addressed in those debates is natural. For it to happen in a manner that demonizes a profession steeped in the traditions of public service is unnecessary, unproductive and offensive.

We hope that you, the leaders of our two major political parties, will join together and work to ensure a fair debate on the pressing domestic and international issues before the electorate. To do otherwise would be a disservice to our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Archer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dennis Archer