DATE: December 4, 2018
TO: Concerned Parties
FROM: Hilary O. Shelton, Director, Washington Bureau

NAACP-OPPOSED EASTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA JUDICIAL NOMINEE THOMAS FARR DEFEATED BY U.S. SENATE

THE ISSUE:
Late in the afternoon on Thursday, November 29, 2018, Senator Tim Scott (SC) announced that he intended to vote against NAACP-opposed Attorney Thomas Farr’s nomination to a life-time appointment to the Federal Court in the Eastern District of North Carolina. Senator Scott’s decision, along with the objections of 50 of his colleagues, was the deciding vote against Mr. Farr; his objections were echoed by several of his colleagues, many of whom had heretofore said they would vote to confirm him. Thus, while nothing is certain in politics, it appears as if Mr. Farr’s nomination is doomed for now.

The NAACP had vehemently opposed his nomination from the beginning. As an attorney, Mr. Farr had worked closely on two of the Senate campaigns for civil rights nemesis Jesse Helms – in 1984 and 1990 – both of which were marked by racism, bias, and blatant attempts to disenfranchise African American voters. He has also consistently taken the lead against victims of employment discrimination, voting rights protection, and against workers’ rights in general. Earlier last week, the Washington Post ran an article which cited a 1991 memo by the U.S. Department of Justice in which Mr. Farr was cited to have been as the “primary coordinator” of the 1984 “ballot security” program conducted by the North Carolina GOP and the 1984 Helms for Senate campaign.

Despite the fact that approximately 30% of the residents under the jurisdiction of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina are African American, and that the district is home to approximately half of the African Americans in North Carolina, this court has never had a judge of African descent in its 143-year history. If confirmed, Thomas Farr would only perpetuate this sorry history of racial and ethnic discrimination and segregation. Furthermore, given his reputation for supporting bias and the disenfranchisement of African American voters, his confirmation would have undoubtedly further eroded the faith of many in the American criminal justice system and the impartiality of the courts.

NAACP opposition to the Farr confirmation was so strong that twice – once just last week on the day before a vote in the full US Senate was scheduled and in February, 2018 – a large number of North Carolina NAACPers, led by NC State Conference of NAACP branches President Rev. Anthony Spearman, spent all day on a bus to come the Washington, DC, to join President Derrick Johnson, the NAACP Washington Bureau, and others to express their strong opposition to the confirmation of Thomas Farr to a life-time appointment as a judge. The group, who were all from North Carolina, consisted of people who lived in the jurisdiction of the Eastern District, including some decorated military Veterans, and other North Carolinians who were familiar with Mr Farr’s record. All were very aware of Attorney Farr’s past actions, and in meeting with their Senators, Senators Scott (SC), Warren (MA), Harris (CA), Booker (NJ), and others, expressed their opposition. Sadly, neither of the 2 North Carolina Senators spoke out against this awful nominee.

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