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February 18, 2010

Hon. Tom Harkin, Chairman

Hon. Michael Enzi, Ranking Member

Committee on Health Education, Labor and Pensions

428 Dirksen Russell Senate Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Harkin and Enzi:

The Society of American Law Teachers (SALT) joins more than seventy civil rights, women's rights, consumer, fair housing and legal organizations, and the American Bar Association in opposing the nomination of Sharon L. Browne as a Director of the Legal Services Corporation. Incorporated in 1974, SALT is a national organization of law teachers whose mission includes extending the power of law to underserved individuals and communities and making the legal profession more inclusive and reflective of the great diversity of this nation. SALT believes that the work of the Legal Services Corporation is essential to the realization of economic and social justice in the United States.

Ms. Browne's record demonstrates that she does not meet the criteria suggested by the Senate Committee that developed the legislation that established the Legal Services Corporation. She is not representative of lawyers who provide and support legal services. She cannot demonstrate that she is committed to allowing Legal Services to operate free from political interference. Finally, Ms. Browne is not committed to the proposition that it is in the national interest that people living in poverty have full access under law to comprehensive and effective legal services.

In 1992, Ms. Browne was a plaintiff in *Brosterhous v. State Bar of California*, seeking to enjoin the use of State Bar dues to advocate for providing legal services for the poor in the state legislature. Subsequently she withdrew as a plaintiff and served as an attorney representing the group of plaintiffs on behalf of the Pacific Legal Foundation. In 1998 and 2003, the Pacific Legal Foundation joined in litigation to have the Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA) held unconstitutional. IOLTA is the second largest source of funding for legal services.

Ms. Browne has vigorously opposed policies that are in the objective interest of the population served by Legal Services. She was one of the most vocal and active supporters of Proposition 209 in California, an initiative campaign that sought to cripple affirmative action efforts, although disguised as an equal rights measure. Ms. Browne has advocated eliminating Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, and supported California Proposition 227, banning bilingual education in public schools, and Proposition 187, restricting access to California's social services, health care, and public education systems based on suspected immigration status.

Ms. Browne's work for the past twenty-five years has been ideologically driven in opposition to the needs of people who must rely on the Legal Services Corporation for access to justice. We urge the Committee on Health Education, Labor and Pensions to reject her nomination.

Sincerely yours,



Raquel Aldana
Co-President



Steven Bender
Co-President