



# American College of Trial Lawyers

## **The American College of Trial Lawyers Issues Statement Opposing Attacks on Judges** *Says Attacks Present a Threat to the Principle of Judicial Independence Enshrined in Our Constitution and A Bedrock of Our Democracy*

NEWPORT BEACH, CALIFORNIA (March 5, 2020) - The American College of Trial Lawyers (The College) today issued a statement opposing attacks on United States Supreme Court Justices, stating that such attacks are a direct threat to judicial independence.

In remarks before a public rally Senator Minority Leader Chuck Schumer publicly called out Justices Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh declaring, “I want to tell you, Gorsuch. I want to tell you, Kavanaugh. You have released the whirlwind, and you will pay the price.” These remarks appeared to threaten the Justices, by name, if they did not vote a certain way on a particular matter pending before the Court.

The following statement was made by **Douglas R Young**, President of the American College of Trial Lawyers:

“While the First Amendment protects the free speech rights of all American citizens, when a prominent and leading member of the legislative branch personally demeans individual members of the judiciary by name and in doing so appears to threaten them if they do not rule in a certain way on a particular issue, the criticisms threaten the balance among our branches of government and in particular the independence of the judiciary. Accordingly, the American College of Trial Lawyers supports the remarks of Chief Justice Roberts following statements by Senator Schumer about certain members of the Court in connection with a case under consideration by the Justices. Senator Schumer surely enjoys the protections of expression afforded all citizens, but he also has a responsibility to allow the rule of law to flourish in our country and to permit our judges to exercise independent judgment in support of the rule of law without undue outside influence or apparent efforts to intimidate.”

The American College of Trial Lawyers believes that attacks on judicial officers when designed to influence their determinations on cases pending before them are an affront to the fundamental principle of judicial independence that cannot be ignored. The College also believes that no public official should interfere in a pending judicial proceeding, take actions or make statements that could reasonably be viewed as intimidating to a judge, or belittle any judge for his/her decision. It is vital that all branches of our government respect the integrity of the judicial process.

The position of the American College of Trial Lawyers is documented in a white paper on [\*The Need to Promote and Defend Fair and Impartial Courts, A Sequel to Judicial Independence: A Cornerstone of Democracy Which Must Be Defended\*](#), which is available on the College website.

**About the [American College of Trial Lawyers](#)**

The American College of Trial Lawyers is composed of preeminent members of the trial bar from the United States and Canada and is recognized as the leading trial lawyers organization in both countries. Founded in 1950, the College is an invitation only fellowship. The College thoroughly investigates each nominee for admission and selects only those who have demonstrated the very highest standards of trial advocacy, ethical conduct, integrity, professionalism and collegiality. The College is dedicated to maintaining and seeking to improve the standards of trial practice, professionalism, ethics, and the administration of justice through education and public statements on important legal issues relating to its mission. The College strongly supports the independence of the judiciary, trial by jury, respect for the rule of law, access to justice, and fair and just representation of all parties to legal proceedings. For more information about the College, visit its website at [www.actl.com](http://www.actl.com).

**CONTACT:**

Eliza Gano  
Communications Manager  
American College of Trial Lawyers  
949-752-1801  
[egano@actl.com](mailto:egano@actl.com)