



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 7, 2016

The American College of Trial Lawyers Issues Statement Opposing Political Attacks on Judges
Says Political Attacks on Judges Pose Direct Threat to Judicial Independence

Irvine, California – The American College of Trial Lawyers (The College) today issued a statement opposing political attacks on judges, stating that such attacks are a direct threat to judicial independence.

The statement was made by Michael W. Smith, president of the American College of Trial Lawyers, on behalf of The College and its 5,900 Fellows.

Smith said, “In the midst of this heated campaign season, the American College of Trial Lawyers is concerned over recent comments and their effect on the independence of the judiciary. Political attacks on judges pose a direct threat to judicial independence. Judicial independence is not established for the benefit of judges, but for all of us. It is the *citizens* who are the beneficiaries of fair and impartial administration of justice consistent with the Rule of Law. Conversely, it is the *citizens* who suffer when judicial independence is compromised.

“On behalf of the American College of Trial Lawyers, I implore the participants in election processes, national and local, including candidates and commentators, to refrain from attacks on individual judges, who are not politicians and are in no position to defend themselves from political attacks. The judiciary has been described as the crown jewel of our constitutional form of government and as such, we must work to preserve its dignity,” said Smith.

The position of the American College of Trial Lawyers is documented in a white paper on [*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 the best of the trial bar from the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico and is widely considered to be the premier professional trial organization in North America. 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 maintains and seeks 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. Learn more at www.actl.com.

Smith is chairman of Christian & Barton, LLP, in Richmond, Va., and its Executive Committee, and is head of the firm’s Litigation section.

###

Contacts:
American College of Trial Lawyers
Eliza Gano

Communications Manager

egano@actl.com

949.752.1801

Etre Communications

Leslie Strickler

leslies@etrecommunications.com

804.240.0807

Lou Anne J. Nabhan

louanne@etrecommunications.com

804-241-7872