



POLICE EXECUTIVE
RESEARCH FORUM

Chuck Wexler
Executive Director

February 8, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Letter in Support of Vanita Gupta, nominee for United States Associate Attorney General

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chairman Durbin and
Ranking Member Grassley:

It is my distinct honor to submit this letter of support for Vanita Gupta, President Biden's nominee to be the next Associate Attorney General of the U.S. Department of Justice.

I am the Executive Director of the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), a membership and research organization of more than 3,000 law enforcement leaders. In my 25 years at PERF, I have worked with numerous professionals at all levels of government. Vanita Gupta is undoubtedly one of the most sincere, knowledgeable and hard-working people I have known. Importantly, she has earned the respect and confidence of PERF members and others in the policing profession.

PERF's experience with Ms. Gupta goes back to her time as Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. This was a time when the country was embroiled in significant issues involving police accountability, legitimacy and relations with the community, in particular communities of color.

It was obvious that Ms. Gupta was incredibly knowledgeable about civil rights law. What was unique – and refreshing – was that she took it upon herself to reach out to PERF and seek out the input and ideas of our members. She wanted the policy recommendations coming out of the DOJ to be ones that law enforcement leaders could understand and embrace. Her approach was always both inquisitive and collaborative. She walks the talk.

Allow me to give you one concrete example of the way Ms. Gupta thinks and leads.

It was early 2016, and the country was still reeling from the police shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and other high-profile use-of-force incidents. At the time, PERF was focused on working to reform use-of-force policies by creating a set of national guidelines. In January of that year, we brought together more than 200 law enforcement leaders for a day-long meeting in Washington, DC. It would turn out to be a significant turning point for changing thinking on police use of force.

When she heard about the meeting, Ms. Gupta asked if she could attend. Unlike many government officials who come to such meetings, say a few words and then leave, Ms. Gupta sat down among the other participants and listened to the entire discussion. At one point we recommended that while police departments obviously need to follow Supreme Court precedent when it comes to use of force, they also should hold themselves to an even higher standard – one that is grounded in the sanctity of human life.

At this point the discussion grew very contentious, as it was clear that we were breaking new ground. After numerous police chiefs and others had spoken, Ms. Gupta quietly raised her hand to speak. “I think this is revolutionary and transformative,” she said. “What PERF is putting out there is changing the paradigm that ultimately may be much better for officer safety, much better for public safety, and much better for the kind of mutual understanding between the community and law enforcement.”

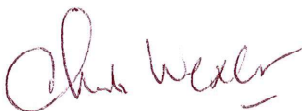
Her remarks at that moment were profound, not because they came from a high-ranking federal official. But because they reflected a keen understanding of the issue, respect for what the police leaders in the room had to say, and a recognition of what was possible and necessary to rebuild trust between police and community.

Ms. Gupta seems ideally suited for the position of Associate Attorney General. She is a consensus-builder and a collaborator, known and respected by both management and labor. She appreciates the current needs of law enforcement while also anticipating future possibilities and opportunities. She values the role of research in policing and is a skilled problem-solver who always looks for creative, practical solutions.

Vanita Gupta would bring knowledge, experience, credibility and a tremendous work-ethic to the position of Associate Attorney General. I join the members of the PERF Board of Directors in urging the Committee on the Judiciary to quickly advance Ms. Gupta’s nomination and the Senate to quickly confirm her.

Thank you for your consideration.

Truly yours,



Chuck Wexler
Executive Director

PERF Board of Directors

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