



## Text File

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**Bill No:** 2015-1635, **Version:** 1

**Committee:** City Council

**Status:** Adopted

**WHEREAS**, the federal courts play a critical role for our nation and our communities. Courts - the infrastructure of justice - are just as important to the rule of law as roads and bridges are to transportation. Making sure our courts are fully functional is an issue of good government; and,

**WHEREAS**, a longtime vacancy on the federal Third Circuit Court of Appeals (which covers federal appeals in Pennsylvania and two other states) has been designated a “judicial emergency” by the Administrative Office of U.S. Courts, and a second vacancy is scheduled to open on July 1, which threatens Pennsylvanians’ access to justice; and,

**WHEREAS**, partisan politics in Washington is blocking timely consideration of judicial nominees across America (including Pennsylvania), so the number of circuit and district court vacancies across America has already grown from 40 to 51 since the beginning of the year, and emergencies have jumped from 12 to 24 in the same period; and,

**WHEREAS**, last Wednesday, the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on pending judicial nominations, the first one in 8 weeks. Federal District Judge Luis Felipe Restrepo, nominee for Third Circuit vacancy, was not on the list of nominees. Despite the fact that Judge Restrepo has the support of both Senators Casey and Toomey and is entirely qualified for the job, Senate Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley has refused to hold a hearing for him; and,

**WHEREAS**, despite publicly expressing enthusiastic support for Restrepo’s nomination six months ago, Senator Pat Toomey <<http://www.rollcall.com/members/422.html>> has let half a year go by without returning the endorsement form (known as a “blue slip”) the committee requires from each home-state senator before a judicial confirmation process begins; and,

**WHEREAS**, Judge Restrepo is an exceptional nominee who should be processed through committee and confirmed before the second vacancy opens on July 1.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the City Council of Pittsburgh supports a strong judiciary, and calls on Pennsylvania Senator Toomey to return the blue slip on Judge Restrepo immediately, ask Senator Grassley to schedule his hearing in order to fill the emergency judicial vacancy on the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, and work to ensure a speedy confirmation before July 1.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that a copy of this Will of Council shall be sent to U.S. Senator Patrick S. Toomey.