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December 12, 2005

Speaker Sheldon Silver  
New York State Assembly  
LOB 932  
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Speaker Silver:

At a time when the process of the selection of a U.S. Supreme Court Judge has intensely focused the attention of the nation on the power and sanctity of the judiciary, I am writing to express my dismay and outrage at the legislature's installation of a second Brooklyn surrogate court judge without a lawful contested election.

Please be advised that, on behalf of concerned Brooklyn Democrats in particular and all Brooklyn citizens generally, I am respectfully requesting that the appointment of Assemblyman Frank Seddio be nullified; and that an election be ordered in the year of 2006 at the time of the scheduled Democratic Primary and General Election. This most moral amendment to correct an unjust and undemocratic situation can be easily accomplished by an act of the New York State Legislature and the Governor.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the reform of the New York State Judiciary is a highly visible matter on the agenda of New York voters. The unfortunate events unfolding in the present Brooklyn trials is not the only indication of scandal and incompetence in the courts. A recent article by Joyce Parnick of the New York Times (12/1/05) highlights the fact that the borough of Queens, a second recipient of a new surrogate judge position, is also now under scrutiny. Please be advised that if we treat these legitimate voter concerns with contempt and continue to ignore the demand for deal-making that is more transparent and more democratic we face the risk of wiping out the idealistic segment of our party which distinguishes Democrats from Republicans.

I hope you will find it possible to launch corrective action immediately to restore the full democratic election process for surrogate judgeships. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely Yours,

Major R. Owens  
Member of Congress