

## Liberal Advocacy Group Assails Roberts on Rights

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The Alliance for Justice, a coalition of 71 women's rights, environmental and other liberal advocacy groups, issued a 103-page report yesterday attacking John G. Roberts Jr.'s record and announced formal opposition to his Supreme Court nomination.

"Judge Roberts has advocated diminishing the role the courts play in enforcing individual rights and freedoms," Alliance president Nan Aron said at news conference. She contended that Roberts has "expressed strong objections to the courts' long-standing recognition of the right to privacy," the right that underpins the Supreme Court's 1973 decision on abortion, *Roe v. Wade*.

Today, five other liberal groups are expected to join the Alliance: the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the NAACP, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the National Partnership for Women & Families, and the National Women's Law Center.

Collectively, these organizations intend to intensify pressure on Senate Democrats to fight President Bush's first Supreme Court nominee. The liberal organizations face an uphill battle because a number of Democrats have indicated that they will not oppose Roberts, a federal appeals court judge who recently received the American Bar Association's highest recommendation.

Among the groups supporting Roberts, Progress for America yesterday announced a relatively modest \$400,000 television buy to run a commercial defending Roberts's right to decline to answer questions related to issues likely to come before the court. The Senate Judiciary Committee is scheduled to take up the Roberts nomination on Tuesday.

"Judge Roberts should not answer questions that force him to prejudge cases. Some senators will object for solely partisan reasons. But a fair judge deserves to be treated fairly," the announcer in the commercial says, citing as precedent the hearings on the nomination of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who told the Judiciary Committee: "I do not want to give here any hints" and "I cannot address that question in the abstract."

Progress for America says it has \$18 million in the bank, but officials said the relatively small amount being spent on commercials during the week before hearings begin reflects their judgment that opposition to Roberts has not yet become strong enough to jeopardize his nomination.

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library announced yesterday that it had found a "large volume" of additional Roberts papers from his days as a White House lawyer. Susan Cooper, a spokeswoman for the National Archives, said the library is still trying to get a handle on what is

in the files so the Bush administration can review them before they are released. Cooper could not say when that would be.

Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (Vt.), the ranking Democrat on Judiciary Committee, called on the administration to immediately release the documents. "This administration has set an unsettling pattern of secrecy by slow-walking relevant documents and stonewalling a narrow request for key records," Leahy said. He cited the fact that the Reagan library had lost an entire Roberts file on affirmative action after administration officials reviewed it.

Staff writers Charles Babington, Jo Becker and R. Jeffrey Smith contributed to this article.

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