

April 18, 2018

## Hirono, Gillibrand, Harris Introduce Bill to Insulate Immigration Judges from Political Interference

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senators Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), and Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) introduced the Immigration Court Improvement Act – a bill that would insulate immigration judges from improper political interference or manipulation. The Senators introduced this bill in response to the recent revelations that the Trump administration will impose unfair, unnecessary, and politically-motivated quotas on immigration judges.

“At a time when the Trump administration is constantly attacking the rule of law and threatening immigrant communities, immigration judges need new legal protections from the President’s political interference,” **Senator Hirono said.** “I will continue to resist this administration’s efforts to force our non-partisan immigration judges to carry out his discriminatory immigration policies using threats of retaliation.”

“Our immigration courts system only works if we uphold the non-partisan nature of their roles rather than allow them to be used as tools to carry out Attorney General Jeff Sessions’s political

agenda,” **Senator Harris said.** “This President has made his lack of respect for the independence of our institutions clear, so we must protect the integrity of our courts from political interference -- interference that flies in the face of due process and fairness for immigrant communities.”

“Families all over our country rely on immigration courts to seek justice, but we have seen a disturbing pattern over the last year of attempts to manipulate immigration court judges. This legislation would help protect our non-partisan immigration judges from outside political interference,” **Senator Gillibrand said.** “I am proud to support this bill, and I urge all New Yorkers to raise their voices with me to defend our immigrant community and make sure they always have access to a justice system that is fair.”

“NAIJ applauds Senator Hirono for leading the effort in Congress to address the structural flaws with the Immigration Court,” **said Judge A. Ashley Tabaddor, President of the National Association of Immigration Judges.** “This bill takes an important first step in protecting the independent decision making authority of the Immigration Judges and the integrity of the court. We urge Congress to promptly act on this important issue.”

“I appreciate that Senator Hirono understands that immigration judges should be able to make determinations as to what they believe to be fair and just without any sort of political pressure, and to ensure the law provides a mechanism for it,” **said Asako**

**Shimizu, Chair of the Hawaii Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association.** “We support the introduction of this bill which is intended to protect core functions of immigration judges, and fair and reasonable application of immigration law.”

The Immigration Court Improvement Act would underscore the judicial nature of the job of immigration judges by requiring, among other things, that:

- The Attorney General supervise them in a way that does not interfere with their independent decision making authority.
- They maintain the appropriate judicial status with the bar of the highest court of their states.
- Actions of immigration judges be judged under the applicable Code of Judicial Conduct, not attorney conduct.
- They not be disciplined for good-faith judicial decisions.
- Their performance appraisals not be measured using any system of completion goals.

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