

# CENTER *for* JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY, INC.

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BY FAX: 202-496-3883 (3 pages)  
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May 20, 2004

Helen Dewar  
The Washington Post

RE: Memorializing your response to CJA's proposal for an investigative expose – AND securing expeditious supervisory review by your editors, beginning with Eric Pianin

Dear Ms. Dewar:

So that memories are "still fresh", this is to memorialize events this afternoon after I e-mailed my three-page letter to you at 12:57 PM, formalizing and reiterating CJA's

"Proposal for an investigative expose of the Senate's wilful refusal to 'scrutinize' the qualifications of 'noncontroversial' federal judicial nominees, including its rebuff of nonpartisan citizen opposition, by a casestudy examination of its confirmation of New York Court of Appeals Judge Richard C. Wesley's nomination to the Second Circuit Court of Appeals"

You responded by e-mail at 1:13 PM, as follows:

"Dear Ms. Sassower – I have inquired into your complaint, proposals, etc., As of now, I plan no story. Moreover, I do not appreciate your making up 'memorable comment' from me that I never made and certainly do not believe. Please do not do so again.... Helen Dewar, Washington Post."

Upon receipt, I immediately phoned what I believed to be your direct number (202-334-6323). After several unavailing attempts to leave a voice mail message, including at the "covering extension", because the "user's mailbox is full", I called The Washington Post's direct number (202-334-6000). I was connected to the national desk, where I obtained your telephone

number on Capitol Hill (202-484-3493). I phoned you there, after first leaving a voice mail message for your editor, Eric Pianin, at 1:25 PM.

My attempt to discuss your e-mail response was unavailing. You refused to specify what "inquires" you had made into my "complaints, proposals, etc." -- or anything about why you planned "no story". Notwithstanding the most cursory examination of the "paper trail" of primary source documents posted on the homepage of CJA's website, [www.judgewatch.org](http://www.judgewatch.org), reveals the story's powerful, politically-explosive nature -- warranting expose treatment -- you refused to identify which documents you had read. You would not even confirm that you had read -- or would read -- my two recent Letters to the Editor, "*Correcting the Record*" ([Roll Call](#), May 10<sup>th</sup>) and "*Portrayal in News Item Found 'Denigrating'*" ([New York Law Journal](#), May 19<sup>th</sup>), each summarizing the significance of this "paper trail".

Instead, you told me that since I was not your editor, you did not have to answer my questions or discuss anything. When I responded that I had already left a voice mail message for Mr. Pianin and asked you to forward him my e-mail, you replied that you could not do so because you had already "excised it" from your system.

For some strange reason, you told me, more than once, that I could write you further e-mails. This, I stated I would not do -- as it was plainly wasteful of my time to do so when I had already written and e-mailed you a formal proposal, which you were refusing to address in any responsible, professional way. Indeed, you rejected my minimal request for an explanation as to why you would not write about the Senate Judiciary Committee's handling of citizen opposition to so-called "noncontroversial" federal judicial nominees -- although denying my suggestion that this might be because it would negatively impact upon Senator Kennedy and Senate Democrats, as it resoundingly would

Finally, nothing better reflects the accuracy of my recollection of your "memorable" April 26<sup>th</sup> comment to me, "what would citizens have to contribute?" -- aside from my having recounted it shortly thereafter to Assistant City Editor Bill Miller when he called me in connection with his "investigation" of my complaint against Henri Cauvin for his two slanted and distorted articles about my trial for "disruption of Congress" -- than your response to this proposal for an investigative expose. Certainly, if you reviewed the "paper trail", you know the enormity of CJA's contribution, spanning more than a decade -- and that coverage by [The Washington Post](#) would cause a major political upheaval at the Senate Judiciary Committee and beyond, effecting far-reaching and long-overdue, nonpartisan, good-government reform, including for.

facilitating citizen contributions.

By copy of this letter to Mr. Pianin, for whom I left a second voice-mail message immediately after speaking with you, I request his expeditious supervisory review – and, if necessary, that of his superiors, specifically including National News Desk Editor Michael Abramowitz, Assistant Managing Editor of the News Desk Liz Spayd, and Managing Editor Len Downey. Surely, it is reasonable to expect that prior to my June 1<sup>st</sup> sentencing date for “disruption of Congress”, the vaunted Watergate-exposing Washington Post will have begun an investigative expose and run a first story about the responses of Senators Hatch, Leahy, Schumer, Clinton, and Chambliss to what the penultimate paragraph of my letter to you suggests.

Should you wish to reconsider your response to CJA’s proposal or to otherwise discuss any aspect of the foregoing, I am always amenable.

Yours for a quality judiciary,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elena R. Sassower", with a stylized flourish at the end.

ELENA RUTH SASSOWER, Coordinator  
Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA)

cc: Eric Pianin, National News Editor

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