

October 13, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: State Holiday in Honor of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Dear Governor Newsom:

I am the President of the California Lawyers Association and write to request that the State of California create a state holiday to honor United States Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Justice Ginsburg was a true pioneer of justice and equality for all, with one of her primary goals being the advancement of women's rights. She was one of only nine women accepted to Harvard Law School out of a class of about 500. Despite finishing at the top of her class, Justice Ginsburg did not receive a single job offer after graduation. "Not a law firm in the entire city of New York would employ me," she later said. "I struck out on three grounds: I was Jewish, a woman and a mother." Yet, she persevered and ended up on the United States Supreme Court, serving as a shining example to women everywhere of what they could do as well in the face of adversity, bias, and prejudice.

That Justice Ginsburg was a model of perseverance and ultimately success for all women in the United States cannot be denied. She became the first female professor to earn tenure at Columbia Law School and co-founded the Women's Rights Project at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Justice Ginsburg led the ACLU in pursuing a series of gender-discrimination cases. She argued six landmark cases before the Supreme Court on behalf of the ACLU, winning five of those cases.

In 1980, Justice Ginsburg was appointed to the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. She was nominated to the United States Supreme Court in 1993 and was the second woman ever confirmed as a Justice of the United States Supreme Court, following Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. On the United States Supreme Court, Justice Ginsburg penned a landmark opinion for the majority that found discrimination against women to violate the Fourteenth Amendment and wrote a dissenting opinion on equal pay that became the basis for equal pay legislation. As the Court was hearing

oral argument on the case in which it decided the Defense of Marriage Act violated the Fourteenth Amendment for its disparate treatment of same-sex marriage, she trenchantly remarked then that this Act institutionalized “two kinds of marriage: the full marriage, and then this sort of skim milk marriage.” Just a few months later, she became the first Supreme Court justice to preside over a same-sex marriage.

Throughout her life, while steadfastly working towards furthering the constitutional rights of those who were marginalized or discriminated against, she remained a model of civility, maintaining a warm friendship with a fellow justice of the Court whose views were very different from hers.

Ultimately, California and the United States as a whole have greatly benefited from the life and work of Justice Ginsburg. She is an icon, inspiration, and role model for many, especially for women for whom her work in the Supreme Court, and her ascension to that august body, might be the most significant development for women since the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment itself. It has not gone unnoticed that she passed in the year in which we celebrated that amendment’s 100th year anniversary.

Though we can never fully honor Justice Ginsburg for her incredible achievements over her long life, one very meaningful way to honor her impact publicly is to officially recognize her on one specific day of the year. That will remind women and others in this state for generations to come of a role model that can inspire them to be the leaders and judges of tomorrow—as they work to make the U.S. Constitution and our other laws better guarantors of freedom, justice, and equal rights for all.

I therefore join the call made by the Lawyers Club of San Diego, among others and respectfully request that you declare a state holiday for Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emilio Varanini". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Emilio Varanini
President, California Lawyers Association