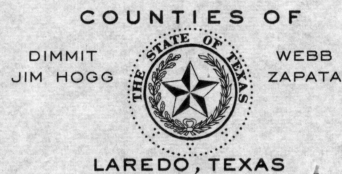


OSCAR M. LAUREL
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
FORTY NINTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT



February 1, 1961

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

COPY FOR DR GARCIA

My dear Mr. President: Subject: Judge E. D. Salinas and the vacant
South Texas United States Judgeship.

Permit me to praise your statements before a group of Negro lawyers representing the National Bar Association last September that, if you were elected President, "there will be a far better representation, on the basis of merit, of persons of all racial groups" in the federal judiciary and that the federal judiciary must have at all levels the best possible judges "representative of the best of all our people".

I have the honor to call your attention to the personal and professional qualifications of 52-year-old State District Judge E. D. Salinas of Laredo, Texas, which have been highly recommended by the individual Justices of the Supreme Court of Texas, by State Attorney General Will Wilson, by many of his judicial colleagues throughout the State and by his local Bar Association; in addition Judge Salinas has the actual judicial experience of over ten years presiding in his own trial court as well as in other district courts in Dallas, Houston, San Antonio and Brownsville as visiting judge.

The question of attitudes in these critical times becomes highly important, Mr. President, in improving or worsening relations between the Spanish-speaking and citizen groups of other backgrounds in Texas and in the United States. Our concepts of a New Era cannot be meaningful if the old attitude of taking for granted brother citizens of Latin American background is re-nurtured and thereby is further propagated the conventional indifference through which Spanish surnames and Latin American racial strains have never been granted representation in the national judiciary serving the State of Texas and by which they have none

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today in the United States mainland as a whole. The gap between the truly underdeveloped citizen reservoir of Mexican and Latin American origin and other citizen groups would grow even greater in terms of the democratic way of life, in terms of opportunity versus self-perpetuating doom, and in terms of first-, second- and third-class citizenships.

The appointment of Judge Salinas would be a symbolic encouragement to Spanish-speaking citizens of the United States to prepare themselves for, and interest themselves in, the great constructive tasks now at hand in America; it would elide from their natural aspirations the frustrating feeling of being regarded as stepchildren under the "benevolent" or prejudiced domination of other racial groups, ganging together to hold them down; and it would stimulate them to participate in and actively foster the spread of goodwill and a better understanding of all segments of the population, including their own.

With the greatest respect I submit that help is now and today sorely and desperately needed by "Latin Americans" here in the United States and that the compassionate aid and assistance of this Democratic Administration to "Latin Americans" should and ought to begin at home in deeds if not in treasure; and then, extend toward Latin Americans abroad. It would more palpably and dramatically demonstrate the sincerity of Washington's sympathy and concern for Latin Americans as human beings and more effectively counteract Communist propaganda that the United States Government helps Latin American peoples only as a quid pro quo for something in return.

The appointment of Judge Salinas would grant our people one solitary representative among the hundreds of U. S. judges of multiple other racial backgrounds, yet it would give national voice to and actually fructify a wishful hope which many of us have cherished for many many years during our long struggle toward first-class American citizenship: a recognition that we belong.

You, Mr. President, in your personal life and in your own personal struggle upward from a Boston Irish boy to the Presidency of the United States must have experienced and felt something of what I have been talking

about. If so, I am sure that understanding, courage and judgment will impel you to stretch your hand without undue delay to us now that such an excellent and unique opportunity presents itself to fill a South Texas federal judges position vacant since 1959! And I am sure, by the same virtues, the Texas Senators will not seek to deny us that helping hand or to delay it any longer.

Respectfully yours

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Oscar M. Laurel

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- cc: The Honorable
Robert F. Kennedy
United States Attorney General
Washington, D. C.
 - cc: The Vice-President
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.
 - cc: The Honorable
Ralph W. Yarborough, U. S. S.
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 - cc: The Honorable
William A. Blakley, U. S. S.
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 - cc: The Honorable
Dennis Chavez, U. S. S.
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 - cc: The Honorable
James O. Eastland, U. S. S.
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
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