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Of Counsel  
**MIGUEL M. DE LA O**  
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August 27, 2007

The Honorable Charlie Crist  
Office of the Governor  
The Capitol, PL05  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

**Re: Nomination of Miguel M. de la O for Circuit Court**

Dear Governor Crist:

I write to strongly recommend the nomination of my friend and colleague, Miguel M. de la O, to fill a vacancy on the Circuit Court for the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida. Because I have had the opportunity to closely observe his outstanding talent, dedication, passion and integrity, I can state without hesitation that Miguel de la O is an extraordinary lawyer and a very special person who would be a credit to the Miami-Dade County judiciary.

Miguel has worked hard to achieve his goals since childhood. Raised by a single mother who was ill much of the time he was growing up and therefore forced to depend on welfare benefits, he graduated seventh in his 1982 class at Miami Jackson Senior High School, where he excelled in debate. He paid his own way through college and law school at Florida State University with loans, scholarships, and a variety of jobs -- busboy, file clerk, runner/messenger, shoe salesman, bill collector -- even working three different jobs at once during one summer so he could afford to return to school the next year. He continued to excel academically and was consistently ranked one of the top collegiate debaters in the country, placing second among 200 teams at the national championship tournament in his senior year. In law school, he was on the Moot Court team, a member of the Law Review, and graduated 13th in his class.

Miguel had been an Associate at another law firm for two years when he agreed to join my former law firm, Sonnett Sale and Kuehne, P.A., in August 1991. I was immediately impressed with his exemplary written and oral communication skills, rare for such a young lawyer. It was evident that he had a flair for creative thinking and advocacy and that he was a tireless and dedicated lawyer.

One of Miguel's considerations in joining our firm was our support and encouragement for community, charitable, and *pro bono* legal service activities. Miguel volunteered his time and effort to serve as a Mentor to minority law students, as a judge in high school and UM law school debate

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and mock trial programs, as a high school mock trial coach, and to assist local charities. His commitment to contribute to his community and his profession was genuine and heartfelt.

Miguel started his own law firm with one partner in 1994 and it has grown to become one of the most respected law firms in South Florida. He has been honored by several publications as one of Florida's top lawyers, and his people and legal skills have attracted a substantial and diverse clientele. His success has enabled him to initiate a program of donating consultation fees to worthy charities, which has raised thousands of dollars for the American Heart Association, Easter Seals, the People with AIDS Coalition, and the Human Services Coalition.

Miguel continues to be an active participant in the community. He was a member of the inaugural class of the Miami Fellows Initiative, an ambitious leadership training program funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. He currently serves as Chair of the City of Miami Civil Service Board and he has served on Miami's Community Relations Board, Charter Review Committee, and the Nominating Committee for Miami's first Civilian Investigative Panel.

Miguel also serves the legal profession as Chair of the Florida Board of Bar Examiners, to which he was appointed by the Florida Supreme Court in 2002, and he previously served as a member (and Chair) of a Florida Bar Grievance committee, on the Board of Directors of the Dade County Bar Association, and as a mentor in its Minority Law Students Mentor Program. He was twice honored as "Guardian Ad Litem of the Month" for the 11th Judicial Circuit.

Although Miguel has already accomplished much in his professional career, he has always had a strong desire to serve his profession and his community as a judge. He has outstanding intellectual ability and a broad knowledge and understanding of the law, and he possesses the highest standards of professionalism, ethics, honesty and integrity, and judicial temperament to become a superb jurist.

Having just ended my term as President of The American Judicature Society, a national organization founded in 1913 "to promote an independent and qualified judiciary and a fair system of justice," I am keenly aware of the importance of selecting the best and the brightest to serve on the bench. Miguel de la O embodies those qualities, and I therefore hope you will give him every favorable consideration. If I can provide any further information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,

NEAL R. SONNETT, P.A.

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