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March 4, 2008

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The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
S-221 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-7020

Dear Majority Leader Reid:

The American Law Deans Association (“ALDA”) is an association of over 130 of the deans of the law schools accredited by the American Bar Association. The views expressed herein represent the views of the ALDA Board (at left), but not necessarily the views of each and every individual member of ALDA. I write on behalf of the ALDA Board.

We write to express our concern about a possible proposed amendment to S. 1638, by Senator Feingold (the “Feingold Amendment”), a copy of which is attached, which could have a serious, negative impact on law schools and legal education throughout the country. This amendment would place arbitrary restrictions on reimbursements and other payments to federal judges when traveling on educational missions.

Federal judges’ involvement with law students and law schools strengthens the nation’s legal enterprise. Participation in moot courts and other events with students, academic conferences, advisory board meetings, and continuing education could be curtailed if the Feingold Amendment were enacted. Judges in Alaska, Hawaii, and non-hub cities, as a practical matter, could be excluded from such activities altogether.

The Federal Judicial Conference already has in place detailed and carefully deliberated ethical rules governing judges’ travel and lodging expenses when participating in these important, educationally valuable activities. We therefore believe the proposed amendment to be unnecessary. Although we strongly support legislation to effect well-deserved and long-overdue pay increases for federal judges, we oppose any amendment thereto, that would place arbitrary restrictions on judges’ travel expenses. We respectfully request that you and your Senate colleagues resist the proposed Feingold amendment.

Below is a list of Law School Deans who agree with the statements in this letter.

Very truly,

David E. Van Zandt
President

cc: The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman, Senate Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Ranking Minority Member, Senate Committee on the Judiciary

enclosure

E. Edwin Eck
University of Montana School of Law

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Stanford University School of Law

Daniel Polsby
George Mason University School of Law

James Alfini
South Texas College of Law

Kellye Testy
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