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Women of Influence

Business Record

Des Moines, Iowa

Dear Women of Influence Committee,

I am writing in wholehearted and enthusiastic support of Connie Ryan as a candidate for the 2019 Women of Influence Award .

I have had the privilege of knowing Connie Ryan from her childhood as a member of First Christian Church, where she showed early signs of intellectual curiosity and ethical integrity.

Over the years, I have watched Connie grow into a woman who has used her voice as a person of faith to speak out against injustice and discrimination. Her passion and activism led to her work with, and then to lead, the Interfaith *Alliance of Iowa*.

In the months following the historic Iowa Supreme Court decision which recognized the constitutional right of all citizens to marriage equally under the law, Connie was a leader in countering the backlash from the religious right. Early on, Connie saw the need to organize a coalition of faith leaders and others to protect the Courts from partisan political attack. She helped to found the non-partisan *Justice Not Politics* organization which former Republican Lt. Governor Joy Corning and I co-chaired. Though this coalition was unsuccessful in preventing the ouster of three Supreme Court Justices in 2010, it was successful in it’s efforts to do the same in 2012. Connie deserves much credit in helping to secure this outcome.

The voice of both of these progressive organizations is needed more than ever today to stand against the ever-increasing intolerance and polarization of our public square. Thankfully, Connie is still leading these efforts.

Connie’s career as a spokesperson for equality and civility have inspired many girls, women and minorities to speak up and speak out. Her story belongs among the many other women who have helped to make Iowa a better place for all. I hope the committee will choose to honor Connie Ryan as a Woman of Influence this year.

Respectfully submitted,

Sally Pederson

Former Lt. Governor of Iowa