



National Task Force to End
Sexual & Domestic Violence

**Statement Condemning Contemptible Behavior of
National Leadership Toward Kavanaugh Accusers**

October 3, 2018

We are appalled and outraged that the Senate Judiciary Committee leadership has released a statement about comments of a sexual nature allegedly made by Julie Swetnick. Such a statement is unacceptable in all events, but particularly because it attempts to smear someone who has not had the opportunity to be interviewed by the FBI. The release of this statement violates the intent of the Rape Shield Rule drafted by the Senate Judiciary Committee in 1991 and voted into law by Congress in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1994. This federal rule is meant to safeguard the victim against the invasion of privacy, potential embarrassment and sexual stereotyping that is associated with public disclosure of intimate sexual details and the infusion of sexual innuendo into the factfinding process. The Senate Judiciary Committee has posted this statement on its website, in violation of the spirit of its own Rule.

In a sworn statement, Ms. Swetnick states she was sexually assaulted. Yet to date, she has not been interviewed by the FBI. Nevertheless, Senate leadership has engaged in a no-holds-barred personal attack on her. It is not unusual for a survivor to describe an experience of sexual violence in ways that do not reveal the full reality of the experience or to try and normalize the experience. However, even aside from these very common reactions, it is unthinkable that the Senate Judiciary Committee would have released this statement publicly and attacked her in this way.

We are equally appalled and outraged by the President's mocking of Dr. Blasey Ford on Tuesday. This behavior marks a new, and previously unimaginable, low point. Through the tireless work of survivors, advocates and activists over the past decades, we have made progress in our national response to sexual assault. Yet it seems the current majority leadership is bound and determined to set us back decades in our effort to help survivors feel comfortable coming forward.

We remind the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee and all leaders that the country is watching. Women are watching as members and staff of the Senate Judiciary Committee try to shame a victim because of her alleged sexual history. Our children are watching as people who are supposed to be role models cheapen their offices and smear victims in an attempt to distract from a legitimate inquiry into the fitness of a Supreme Court candidate. Survivors are watching as people trivialize their experiences, mock them and make what was already an excruciatingly difficult decision to come forward that much more difficult.

This behavior is completely unacceptable. Ms. Swetnick, Dr. Ford, and all relevant witnesses must be interviewed, and these personal attacks and victim-blaming tactics must cease.

For more information, contact Terri Poore at terri@endsexualviolence.org or Kiersten Stewart at kstewart@futureswithoutviolence.org.