

# NEWS ...

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Kavanaugh: Will They Listen?**

**OP-ED BY CANDIDATE FOR IL HOUSE JENNIFER GONG-GERSHOWITZ**

Today, the Senate will hear testimony from Professor Christine Blasey Ford who says that Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her in high school. The question is whether they will listen—whether our lives are granted equal power and equal worth.

I have spent my career as a human rights attorney, fighting to demand that our justice system grant equal recognition to women and girls. For our lives to have equal value, our voices must be given equal authority.

Kavanaugh has denied the allegations of sexual misconduct by three women who have come forward publicly. In the balance of justice, the scales are often tipped in favor of the powerful. In this case, a Supreme Court nominee testifying to a Senate Judiciary Committee where the majority members are comprised entirely of men who cannot personally relate to the stories of women who have come forward—and those who have not. It's easy to dismiss what you cannot understand.

I have worked with victims of trafficking and domestic violence, and it has been my experience that women are often reluctant to tell their stories even when their lives quite literally depend on it. There is a fatalistic expectation among survivors that their word will be less credible than the denial of the accused or a culture that simply regards them as less than. The future for women in this country is on the line with Kavanaugh's potential lifetime appointment to our nation's highest court – the court that will decide whether women will retain agency over our bodies and our lives.

I am not only a human rights lawyer who knows that women's rights are human rights, I am also the mother of 3 boys who are also listening. Our children are watching to see how the adults in the room react in this moment. Is Dr. Ford's word enough to warrant an independent investigation before Judge Kavanaugh is seated for life on the Supreme Court? I believe this moment demands, at a minimum, a pause and a thorough investigation that protects the dignity of the accuser and the rights of the accused. Most importantly, I want our children to know that their government can be trusted to imbue the process with the gravity and sincerity that it deserves.

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Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz is a human rights attorney, mom, and community volunteer running as the Democratic nominee in Illinois' 17<sup>th</sup> House District. Jennifer has served as an attorney at Winston and Strawn, a partner of the National Immigrant Justice Center, founding member and co-chair of the Illinois Unaccompanied Children's Task Force, Director of the Highland Park-Highwood Legal Aid Clinic, board member of the Glenview Education Foundation, and a member of the Social Justice Committee at Northfield's Temple Jeremiah.