January 1, 2000 [Replace with today’s date]
To: Friends and Family of [Defendant’s Full Name]
From: F. Clinton Broden

Re: Letters to the Judge in connection with [Defendant’s First Name]′s sentencing

As you know, [Defendant’s Full Name] will be facing sentencing before United States District Judge [Judge’s Full Name] in connection with his guilty plea to [Offense]. The sentencing is currently scheduled for [Sentencing Date]. Some of you may be thinking of writing a supportive letter about [Defendant’s First Name] to the Judge in an effort to help [Defendant’s First Name] receive the lightest possible sentence. The purpose of this memorandum is to advise you of the proper manner of doing this in terms of when and where to send the letters, proper manner of addressing the Judge, and some do’s and don’t’s about content.

The letter (but not the envelope) should be addressed to:

Honorable [Judge’s Full Name]
United States District Judge
1100 Commerce Street
Dallas, TX 75242

The proper manner of addressing the Judge is “Your Honor” or “Dear Judge [Judge’s last name].” The letter should refer to [Defendant’s First Name] by name either between the address and the salutation or in the first sentence. The letter should also contain your return address and the date. Generally, the letter should be between one and three pages long.

As to content of the letter, we want to be able to show the Judge the many positive aspects of [Defendant’s First Name]′s character and background. Attached to this Memorandum is a brief outline that you can use to help you with your letter. Of course, it is important that you write your own letter in your own words. You should identify in the letter how you know [Defendant’s First Name] and for how long. It might be good to include, from personal experience, a specific and heartwarming example of [Defendant’s First Name]′s generous, kind, and/or loving character. A more general letter about a lengthy and positive relationship in which [Defendant’s First Name] has been a trustworthy and caring friend or family member is also helpful.

In contrast, it would not be useful to declare that [Defendant’s First Name] is or must be innocent or to express resentment as to his treatment by the government or the Judge; there is always a risk that such sentiments will be attributed to him and be held against him. Likewise, remember that [Defendant’s First Name] is accepting full responsibility for having done things he should not have done, which he acknowledges were illegal, and which he knew or should have known at the time were wrong. Some indication that you recognize the same, but still have the high opinion of him that you have, can be helpful. So as you can see, the focus should be on Insert 2 as a person, and not on any feelings as to his guilt or innocence, about whether someone else is really to blame for what has happened to [Defendant’s First Name], or about the criminal justice system in general.

Very Important: Please make sure that you **DO NOT MAIL YOUR LETTER DIRECTLY TO THE JUDGE — MAIL IT TO MY OFFICE** ([at 2600 State St, Dallas, TX 75204](http://www.brodenmickelsen.com/contact/)). This is critical because, although you of course will include in your letter only what you consider to be information that will be helpful to [Defendant’s First Name] at sentencing, there is always a possibility that someone may unintentionally include something that could actually be harmful. Before I send a letter to the Judge, I need to check it in light of my experience so that I am confident that we submit only potentially helpful material. In addition, I will want to submit all the letters to the Judge at one time in an organized way. I cannot do this if the letters don’t all go through me.

It is also very important that I receive your letters no later than two weeks prior to sentencing so that I can review them, suggest changes if necessary, receive any revised letters, and organize them all as part of a cohesive sentencing package for Insert 2 that I can submit to the Judge in advance of the sentencing date.

Thank you all in advance for your help and support to [Defendant’s First Name] in this important time.

Honorable [Judge’s Full Name]
Return Address United States District Judge Date
1100 Commerce Street
Dallas, TX 75242

**Outline to help write a letter of support to the judge**

Re: [Defendant’s Full Name]

**Paragraph 1 - Relationship**

a. In what capacity do you know [Defendant’s Full Name]? (i.e. relative, friend, spouse)
b. How long have you known him/her?
c. Feelings for [Defendant’s First Name] (Important to show love, friendship, respect)

**Paragraph 2 - General statement of support**

a. Do you understand the trouble [Defendant’s First Name] is in?
b. Have you talked with him/her about their trouble?
c. Are you able to help them in any way? (Place to live, job, other support)

**Paragraph 3 - Statement on character**

a. What good things can you say about [Defendant’s First Name]?
b. Mention character traits (honesty, courage, love, etc. and examples)
c. Offer any personal experiences or insights that may help the Judge understand [Defendant’s First Name]′s true character.

**Paragraph 4 - Conclusion**

a. Express to Judge in your own words how [Defendant’s First Name] knows he/she has done wrong, regrets doing what he/she did, and wants to go forward with his/her life.
b. Because probation is a possibility in this case, it is Insert to tell the Judge that you do not think society would benefit from sending [Defendant’s First Name] to jail and that a prison sentence would be detrimental to all concerned. It is important to explain why you think this.

Respectfully yours,

Your Name