

THE FACTS ON SENATOR JEFF SESSIONS Proposed Nominee for Attorney General is Dangerous to Civil Rights and Unfit for the Job

BACKGROUND

On November 18th, President-elect Donald Trump selected Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL) as his nominee to become the attorney general of the United States. A key responsibility of the attorney general is to oversee the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division — enforcing our nation's civil rights laws and upholding the U.S. Constitution.

The attorney general also plays a significant role in immigration enforcement and adjudication, including setting policy, through the oversight of the immigration court system and the appointment of immigration judges.

Senator Sessions has opposed civil rights legislation and led anti-immigrant efforts throughout his Senate career. His record of disenfranchising and denying the rights of people of color, immigrants, and Muslim communities, as well as his overtly racist statements made during his career as U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Alabama, make him unfit for the position of attorney general of the United States.

THE PROBLEM WITH SESSIONS

In his own words:

Senator Jeff Sessions has bemoaned the “last four decades” as a “period of record uncontrolled immigration to the United States” and remarked that “since 1965,” there has been an “extreme unprecedented pattern of immigration... unlike most established countries in the world.”

Citation: A Memo For Republican Members From Sen. Jeff Sessions, [Immigration Handbook for the New Republican Majority](#); Quote from Subcommittee Hearing on “[The Impact of High Levels of Immigration on U.S. Workers](#)”

Senator Sessions has emerged as the lead anti-immigration voice in the United States Senate over the course of his 20-year tenure. Sessions has consistently expressed his opposition to, and raised alarmist concern regarding, patterns of immigration post-1965 – a watershed year in which the United States dismantled its explicitly racist national origin quotas (including the remaining vestiges of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882) and finally allowed larger numbers of non-Europeans into the U.S., creating the diversity we see in America today. Sessions has been the standard bearer for a nativist vision of America, sounding the alarm regarding the “unprecedented” percentage of the American population that is foreign-born – without regard for the fact that the current percentage is lower than during the late 1800s, when the foreign-born were overwhelmingly from Western Europe.

Highlights of his record in several areas, including immigration and voting rights, illustrate that Sessions, once [deemed unfit to serve as a federal judge](#) due to his racist statements and sentiments, is unqualified and inappropriate for the position of attorney general.

WHY THIS NOMINATION MATTERS TO AAPIS

- Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) have become the [fastest growing minority group](#) in the U.S., surpassing Latinos in recent years.
- Since 2008 there have been more immigrants coming from Asia than any other region in the world. Nearly two-thirds of all Asian Americans today are foreign-born, though Asian Americans have been part of the fabric of American society for centuries.
- 92 percent of Asian Americans are immigrants or the children of immigrants.
- [1.5 million](#) Asian immigrants are undocumented.
- 57 percent of Asian Americans are non-Christian, including 4 percent who are Muslim.

SENATOR SESSIONS ON IMMIGRATION

Proposes a Ban on Muslim Immigrants and Refugees

In his own words:

“We have a right and a duty to favor the admission of immigrants who support and celebrate our pluralist western values... If we cannot ensure the adequate screening of any individual, we must not admit them to the United States. Period.”

Citation: [Quote from Judiciary Committee Hearing on “Oversight of Administration’s FY 2017 Refugee](#)

The Facts:

- ✓ Senator Sessions has [supported Trump’s proposal](#) to ban Muslims from entering the country.
- ✓ Sessions opposes Syrian refugees coming to the U.S. (at least those who are Muslim), [implying all are terrorists](#).
- ✓ Syrian refugees already receive thorough [vetting](#) before being resettled in the U.S.
- ✓ Sessions has received [awards from anti-Muslim organizations](#) and spoken at their events, including the David Horowitz Freedom Center and the Center for Security Policy.

A Record of Opposing Family-Based Immigration and Diversity in Immigration

In his own words:

“Because a person chooses to leave their home country and come to the United States does not necessarily mean they have the right to demand that their father or their other extended family members be allowed to come if they don’t otherwise meet the standard.”

Citation: [Gender Bias Seen in Visas for Skilled Workers](#), The New York Times, March 2013

The Facts:

- ✓ Senator Sessions proposed eliminating immigration categories that allow U.S. citizens to sponsor their parents, sons, daughters, and siblings, among other provisions that promote family unity.
- ✓ Sessions wants to reduce overall immigration, especially by low-income immigrants and family-based immigration.

An Inhumane Anti-Immigrant Record

The Facts:

- ✓ Senator Sessions supported Alabama's harsh anti-immigrant law, HB 56, which required local police to inquire about immigration status, public schools to track children's immigration status, and encouraged racial profiling.
- ✓ Sessions proposed extreme restrictions on the number of people on visas who could work lawfully in the U.S.
- ✓ Sessions has led the opposition to every bill to grant legal status to undocumented immigrants since he joined the Senate. He strongly opposed the **DREAM Act** and every recent bipartisan immigration reform bill.
- ✓ Sessions attacked policies that protect limited English proficient immigrants and seeks to reduce immigrants' access to benefits.
- ✓ Sessions has sought to withhold federal funding to localities with sanctuary city policies.
- ✓ Sessions has offered amendments to limit immigrants with status access to federal health insurance programs, including tax credits in the exchanges under the Affordable Care Act.

Ties to Anti-immigrant Groups

Words from the company he keeps:

FAIR's current president stated that supporters of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act wanted to "retaliate against Anglo-Saxon dominance" and that the policy is causing "chaos and will continue to create chaos." FAIR's founder wrote that "for European-American society and culture to persist requires a European-American majority, and a clear one at that."

Citation: [Southern Poverty Law Center's Hatewatch](#), November 2016

The Facts¹:

- ✓ Senator Sessions has close relationships with the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), which is labeled a hate group, and contends that America must maintain a European-American majority. Sessions has [received FAIR's Franklin Society award](#) for his anti-immigrant leadership, keynoted their board of advisors dinner, and regularly attends their annual events.
- ✓ Sessions is closely tied to the Center for Immigration Studies and Numbers USA, which promote greatly reducing overall immigration, seek a majority white country, and oppose a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.
- ✓ The Center for Immigration Studies has referred to immigrants as "third-world gold diggers" and its leader said, "My guess is that Haiti's so screwed up because it wasn't colonized long enough."

¹ Information in this section is largely drawn from Southern Poverty Law Center's Hatewatch article, ["Jeff Sessions: Champion of Anti-Muslim and Anti-Immigrant Extremists"](#) (November 18, 2016).

SPOTLIGHTING SESSIONS' DISREGARD FOR CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

In his own words:

Calls a black attorney “boy” and a white civil rights attorney a “disgrace to his race”; tells a black attorney to “be careful what you say to white folks”; and calls the NAACP and ACLU un-American for “trying to force civil rights down the throats of people.”

Citation: [Sessions Dogged By Old Allegations of Racism](#), CNN.com, November 2016

[Why I told the Senate that Jeff Sessions thought civil rights groups were ‘un-American’](#), Washington Post, November 2016

The Facts:

- ✓ Senator Sessions was [rejected for a federal judgeship](#) after witnesses testified that he made racist remarks.
- ✓ Sessions does not believe in the Constitutional guarantee [that all people born in the United States should be granted U.S. citizenship](#).
- ✓ Sessions has supported extreme and harsh immigration enforcement and the criminalization of immigrants such as criminal prosecution and prison time for people who enter the country illegally or are out of status, despite the fact that many of them came to America fleeing violence, persecution, and poverty.
- ✓ Sessions has not supported programs and policies [that attempt to end racial disparities](#) in employment, educational attainment, or incarceration rates.
- ✓ Senator Sessions has [opposed criminal justice reform](#), supported strict sentences for drug offenders, and expressed skepticism about the need for special federal civil rights protections for LGBT people.

SESSIONS OPPOSES VOTING RIGHTS PROTECTIONS

In his own words:

Senator Sessions referred to the Voting Rights Act as “a piece of intrusive legislation”

Citation: [The First Senator to Endorse Donald Trump Is a Longtime Opponent of Civil Rights](#), The Nation, February 2016

The Facts:

- ✓ Sessions praised the 2013 Supreme Court decision, *Shelby County v. Holder*, that struck down part of the Voting Rights Act with a statement that in “[Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, people aren't being denied the vote because of the color of their skin](#).” A panel of three judges on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in North Carolina found the state’s new voting restrictions “[target African Americans with almost surgical precision](#).”
- ✓ As a U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Alabama, Sessions [prosecuted three black civil rights activists](#) engaged in get out the vote efforts with voting fraud and other crimes. The jury found them not guilty.