



January 9, 2017

The Honorable Chuck Grassley, Chairman
US Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, Ranking Member
US Senate Committee on the Judiciary
152 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Grassley and Senator Feinstein:

We, the undersigned group of over 100 African American faith leaders, come together to urge you to vote against the confirmation of Sen. Jeff Sessions as the next U.S. attorney general. With his long and troubling history of attacks on civil rights, Sen. Sessions simply cannot be relied on to protect the rights of all Americans—a critical responsibility of our nation’s attorney general.

While serving as a U.S. attorney in the 1980s, Sen. Sessions unsuccessfully prosecuted multiple African American voting rights advocates, including a trusted advisor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who had worked to register rural, elderly African Americans in Alabama. With his actions, Mr. Sessions sent a chilling message to those working to ensure African Americans were able to exercise their constitutionally-protected right to vote.

When Mr. Sessions was being considered for a position as a U.S. District Court judge, a federal prosecutor testified that Sessions had agreed with a comment that a white attorney representing African American clients may be a “disgrace to his race.” The prosecutor also reported that Mr. Sessions had called the NAACP “un-American,” and a Black attorney testified that Mr. Sessions had referred to him as “boy.”

But our concern is aroused not only by these previous actions, but also by his current record. As a senator, Mr. Sessions voted against reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act, legislation designed to fight sexual and domestic violence, and against the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, a proposal to help address the gender pay gap. He applauded the 2013 Supreme Court *Shelby County v. Holder* decision that gutted a key provision of the Voting Rights Act and has since opposed efforts to modernize and restore these crucial protections against racial discrimination in voting.

It is not an overstatement to say that Sen. Sessions’ nomination is a grave threat to the civil rights of the communities we serve as faith leaders.

Ensuring the enforcement of our country’s civil rights laws is, as the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund’s Sherrilyn Ifill aptly calls it, a “sacred duty.” It is the way we protect the steady but fragile progress made towards the vision of a country where justice is applied fairly across all people, where all people can work without harassment or discrimination, and where all of us can exercise the franchise free from barriers or intimidation.

Sen. Sessions’ record as a civil rights opponent, his unswerving hostility to the very rights he would be tasked with protecting, makes him categorically unfit to take up this sacred work. We urge you in

the strongest possible terms to heed the concerns of African American faith leaders, and many other communities, and to reject Sen. Sessions' nomination for attorney general.

Signed,

1. African American Episcopal Church
2. Reverend Charles Adams, Detroit, MI
3. Reverend Terry Alexander, Florence, SC
4. Minister Dr. James Allen, Virginia Beach, VA
5. Reverend William C. Bailey, Baltimore, MD
6. Reverend Dr. Kip Banks, Washington, DC
7. Reverend Dr. Steve Bland, Jr., Detroit, MI
8. Reverend Brendolyn Boseman, Aiken, SC
9. Reverend DeLishia Boykin, Burke, VA
10. Reverend Dr. Paul Brown, Sr. , Atlanta, GA
11. Reverend Herbert Bruce, Forestville, MD
12. Reverend Paul Bush, Aiken, SC
13. Mother Merceil Burkhalter, Minneapolis, MN
14. Reverend Dr. William C. Calhoun, Baltimore, MD
15. Reverend Dr. Carolyn Clark Carlisle, Columbia, SC
16. Bishop Kenneth Carter, Atlanta, GA
17. Minister Dorothy Chaney, Miami, FL
18. Pastor H.L Chaney, Cairo, GA
19. Dr. Nesa Chappelle, Upper Marlboro, MD
20. Dr. Pernella Chubbs-Wilson, Roanoke, VA
21. Reverend Levi Combs, III, Camden, NJ
22. Dr. Christopher Cockrell, Meridian, MS
23. Dr. Veronica R. Coleman, Virginia Beach, VA
24. Bishop Victor Couzens, Cincinnati, OH
25. Reverend Fred Crawford, New York City, NY
26. Reverend Jeffrey Dove, New Smyrna Beach, FL
27. Darryl E. Edwards II, Jacksonville, FL
28. Reverend Susie Elliott, Brooklyn, NY
29. Reverend Dr. Willie Gable, New Orleans, LA
30. Apostle Marlella Gantt, Philadelphia, PA
31. Reverend Jimmy Gates, Cleveland, OH
32. Bishop AD Givens, Camden, SC
33. Reverend Johnnie Green, New York City, NY
34. Pastor Reginald Gundy, Jacksonville, FL
35. Reverend Barry Hargrove, Baltimore, MD
36. Reverend Sekinah Hamlin, Greensboro, NC
37. Reverend Barry Hargrove, Baltimore, MD
38. Reverend Sedrick Hamner, Atlanta, GA
39. Elder Lee Harris, Jacksonville, FL
40. Minister Bessie R. Hayes, Kensington, MD
41. Reverend Carolyn Henry-Hurst, MD, Cleveland, OH
42. Pastor Jerome Hurst, Cleveland, OH
43. Deacon Bobbi VL Jackson, Winnsboro, SC
44. Rev. Leonard B. Jackson, Las Vegas, NV

45. Sister Carrie Johnson, Longwood, FL
46. Reverend Cathy C. Jones, Charlotte, NC
47. Reverend Louis B. Jones, II, Washington, DC
48. Reverend Greg King, Richmond, VA
49. Dr. Terence K. Leathers, Clayton, NC
50. Reverend A. Faye London, Memphis, TN
51. Reverend Alvin Love, Chicago, IL
52. Dr. Lester A. McCorn, Baltimore, MD
53. Sister Glenda McCullough, Jacksonville, FL
54. Reverend Isaac C. McCullough, Jacksonville, FL
55. Reverend Timothy McDonald, III, Atlanta, GA
56. Minister Leslie Watson Malachi, Waldorf, MD
57. Reverend Dr. Tony Minor, Cleveland, OH
58. Reverend Dr. Susan Newman Moore, Washington, DC
59. Reverend Robert Nicolas, Washington, DC
60. Reverend Wanda C. Outlaw, Suitland, MD
61. Minister Jabari Paul, Tallahassee, FL
62. Reverend Dr. Clarence Pemberton, Philadelphia, PA
63. Reverend Dr. Geraldine Pemberton, Philadelphia, PA
64. Dr. Leenette Morse Pennington, Cocoa Beach, FL
65. Reverend Gilbert Pickett, New York City, NY
66. Minister Tammy Pink, Los Angeles, CA
67. Elder Terry Price, Tallahassee, FL
68. Reverend Frank Raines, III, Buffalo, NY
69. Reverend Calvin Rice, New York City, NY
70. Pastor Jason Ridley, Columbus, OH
71. Deacon Marva Riley, Cheverly, MD
72. Sister Catherine Jackson-Roberts, Washington, DC
73. Sister Melba Salter, Denver, CO
74. Reverend Dr. Kenneth Samuel, Stone Mountain, GA
75. Reverend Dr. Robert Shine, Philadelphia, PA
76. Reverend Madison Shockley, Los Angeles, CA
77. Reverend Lavee Sims, Hattiesburg, MS
78. Rev. Lester A. Smalls, Aiken, SC
79. Sister Beverly C. Smith, Catonsville, MD
80. Reverend Dr. Susan Smith, Columbus, OH
81. Reverend T. Anthony Spearman, Greensboro, NC
82. Rev. Dr. Rebecca Stitt, Cleveland, OH
83. Reverend L. Charles Stovall, Dallas, TX
84. Bishop Mitchell Taylor, New York City, NY
85. Presiding Elder Jane E. Thomas, Perry, GA
86. Reverend Dr. Jackie Thompson, Oakland, CA
87. Reverend James Thompson, North Charleston, SC
88. Reverend Da'Henri Thurmond, Sr., Savannah, Georgia
89. Reverend Ezra Tillman, Flint, MI
90. Pastor Bertie Vereen, Jacksonville, FL
91. Sister Jackie DuPont Walker, Los Angeles, CA
92. Reverend Carl Washington, New York City, NY
93. Reverend Mark Whitlock, Los Angeles, CA

94. Reverend Dr. Dennis Wiley, Washington, DC
95. Reverend Dr. Christine Wiley, Washington, DC
96. Dr. Mercuria Chase Williams, Atlanta, GA
97. Elder Willie Wiley, Augusta, GA
98. Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Eastern Shore, MD
99. Reverend Charles Williams, Detroit, MI
100. Reverend Lavisha S. Williams, Raleigh, NC
101. Presiding Elder Melvin E. Wilson, Brooklyn-Westchester District, NY
102. Reverend Patrick Young, E. Elmhurst, NY