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January 6, 2017

United States Senate Judiciary Committee  
Senator Charles Grassley, Chairman  
Senator Dianne Feinstein, Ranking Member  
224 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, D. C. 20510-6050

**RE: Confirmation Hearing for U.S. Senator Jeff Sessions as U.S. Attorney General**

Dear Senator Grassley and Senator Feinstein:

I wish to submit my testimony in opposition to the confirmation of U.S. Senator Jeff Sessions for Attorney General of the United States of America.

As an attorney, Alabama state senator, and community leader, I have had firsthand experience with Senator Jeff Sessions as a U.S. Attorney, as an Alabama Attorney General, and as a U.S. Senator. My experiences convince me that Senator Sessions cannot do justice as U.S. Attorney General, the top person over the entire United States Department of Justice.

In the late seventies and early 1980s, Perry County, Alabama was a majority Black county. However, White candidates were winning elections by voting absentee ballots for dead and other ineligible persons. Black leaders strongly complained to law enforcement about these violations. Albert Turner and others traveled to Washington, D.C. to complain directly to U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese and other high-ranking Justice Department officials. They were informed that nothing could be done and that Blacks would have to learn to use the absentee voting process. I was directly involved in these efforts, as an attorney and as a community leader.

When African Americans began to win elections through effective and legal use absentee voting, White leaders began to complain about the Blacks' use of absentee ballots. Jeff Sessions, as U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Alabama, immediately responded to the complaints of Whites with a full-blown investigation. I was the initial and coordinating attorney in these matters relating to the investigation.

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In 1985, numerous Black voters were placed on a bus parked at the spot where the shooting of Jimmie Lee Jackson occurred in February 1965. This shooting and subsequent death had triggered the momentous Bloody Sunday March and the historic Selma-to-Montgomery March, events that led to the enactment of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. As the bus was being loaded to go to Mobile to for its occupants of Black voters to testify before a grand jury, numerous law enforcement officers were present and openly armed with all kinds of visible weapons.

Despite the fact there was a federal courthouse 30 miles away in Selma, the U.S. Attorney's Office required these potential witnesses to travel 168 miles to Mobile and stay overnight. The massive armed law enforcement contingent that had been present in Perry County escorted the bus to Mobile. This was maximum intimidation directed by U.S. Attorney Jeff Sessions. Any person who misuses law enforcement through these kinds of tactics should not be a U.S. Attorney, much less the Attorney General of the United States of America.

Three Perry County citizens – Albert Turner, Evelyn Turner, and Spencer Hogue – were indicted. After they were released on bond, U.S. Attorney Jeff Sessions moved to revoke Albert Turner's bail. During the bail revocation hearing for Albert Turner, massive armed law enforcement was again present. This extended, massive intimidation was designed to frighten Black voters. If U.S. Attorney Sessions abused his power to quash voting and civil rights in his former position, which he did, he certainly cannot be entrusted with the highest law enforcement position in the nation.

A massive number of charges were lodged against these three Perry County citizens. As I recall, there were more than 70 counts. At trial, the witnesses, who had been so thoroughly intimidated by the 168-mile trip, overnight stay in Mobile, and the presence of massive openly armed law enforcement, simply told the truth. A jury of Alabama citizens unanimously exonerated Albert Turner, Evelyn Turner, and Spencer Hogue.

The Senate Judiciary Committee hearing before which I testified in 1986 brought out numerous racial incidents directly involving Jeff Sessions including his saying that the NAACP and other associations were "un-American organizations." He called a Black lawyer in his office "boy" and said that he should "be careful how he talked to White people." He also said a White lawyer who worked with African Americans on civil rights issues "may be a traitor to his race."

Thomas Figures, who worked U.S. Attorney's office under Jeff Sessions and who testified against Jeff Sessions at the federal confirmation hearing in 1986, was subsequently indicted by Jeff Sessions in early 1990s. Figures personally told me and others that the indictment was solely in retaliation for his testifying against Sessions at the 1986 hearing. Figures was fully exonerated by a jury of his peers. The misuse of the power of the federal government as U.S. Attorney demonstrates that U.S. Senator Jeff Sessions cannot do justice as Attorney General of the United States of America.

As an Alabama state senator, I also have experience with Jeff Sessions when he served as Attorney General for the State of Alabama. On various occasions as Alabama Attorney General, Sessions used his position to prevent African Americans from achieving justice. This includes his actions to kill an effort to secure districts for the Alabama Supreme Court, the Court of Civil Appeals, and Court of Criminal Appeals instead of the partisan statewide election system Alabama still utilizes. Sessions also used his position to strongly oppose efforts to secure fair and equitable funding for public education in Alabama. At every turn, Sessions has strongly opposed equal rights.

More recently, I have interacted with Sessions in his role as United States Senator. Last year, I and others flew to Washington, D.C. to ask Senator Sessions to remove his opposition to the proposed nominations of several African American attorneys to the federal bench. Sessions did not budge. In the 20 years that Jeff Sessions has served in the United States Senate, only one African American attorney has been confirmed to the federal bench in Alabama and he replaced retiring African American Federal District Judge U.W. Clemon. Moreover, as a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Jeff Sessions opposed confirmation of any judicial candidate who had any history whatsoever of working for civil rights.

There is nothing in U.S. Senator Jeff Sessions record to show that he has changed for the better. In fact, his continuing actions reinforce his long-standing opposition to justice for African Americans and other minorities. I pray that this Committee will consider this and other testimony about Jeff Sessions positions and actions throughout his career, which are contrary to justice, and decline to confirm Jeff Sessions as Attorney General for the United States of America.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Hank Sanders*

Hank Sanders  
Alabama State Senator

HS/gjp

cc: The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S230 US Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

cc: The Honorable Charles Schumer, Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
S221 US Capitol  
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