

January 9, 2017

Chairman Chuck Grassley
Senate Judiciary Committee
United States Senate

Ranking Member Dianne Feinstein
Senate Judiciary Committee
United States Senate

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Feinstein:

We, the undersigned civil rights, advocacy, community, and interfaith groups, write to express our profound concern regarding President-elect Donald Trump's intention to nominate Senator Jefferson B. Sessions (R-AL) as the next Attorney General of the United States. Given his 30-year record on a number of issues impacting the communities we represent, as well as his association with known hate groups, we seriously question Senator Sessions' willingness to protect the rights of all Americans.

The Attorney General is charged with ensuring the fair and impartial administration of justice for all Americans. Throughout his public life, Senator Sessions has opposed the enforcement of civil rights laws and taken anti-immigrant and anti-LGBTQ positions. Among many other concerns, he recently expressed anti-Muslim views and defended the President-elect's call for a ban on Muslim immigration into the United States. Answering a question about a religion-based ban on *Meet the Press* last year, he brushed aside concerns that regulations targeting the adherents of a particular faith would plainly violate the First Amendment, stating: "There is no constitutional right to come to America if you possess an ideology that is dangerous."¹ Further underscoring his position, Senator Sessions was one of the few Senators who voted against a proposed amendment to existing legislation that would prevent a religious litmus test for people entering the country.

Alarming, Senator Sessions has also chosen to align himself with known anti-Muslim hate groups and their leaders. In 2014, he accepted an award from a group founded by David Horowitz, a leading anti-Muslim voice in this country. Mr. Horowitz founded the David Horowitz Freedom Center (DHFC) to combat "the efforts of the radical left and its Islamist allies to destroy American values and disarm this country as it attempts to defend itself in a time of terror."² Senator Sessions has attended several DHFC convenings of prominent anti-Muslim advocates, lawmakers, and journalists. When accepting the DHFC award, Mr. Sessions spoke of his admiration for Mr. Horowitz, and praised others who have previously been awarded. Previous award recipients include Pamela Geller, who

¹ Sam Kestenbaum, *Trump's Muslim Ban Has an Advocate in Attorney General Pick Jeff Sessions*, FORWARD, Nov. 18, 2016, <http://forward.com/news/354898/trumps-muslim-ban-has-an-advocate-in-attorney-general-pick-jeff-sessions/>.

² David Horowitz Freedom Center, *About*, <http://www.horowitzfreedomcenter.org/about>.

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leads her own anti-Muslim hate group and is considered one of the chief architects of the anti-Muslim movement in the United States.

In 2015, Mr. Sessions accepted an award from yet another anti-Muslim hate group, the Center for Security Policy (CSP) run by Frank Gaffney. Both CSP and Mr. Gaffney have played a significant role in fomenting anti-Muslim hate by promoting a dangerous and false narrative regarding the threat posed by the American Muslim community. As just one example, Mr. Gaffney infamously accused Muslim employees of the federal government of acting as agents of the Muslim Brotherhood. We also are troubled that Senator Sessions did not initially disclose the full extent of his connection with these organizations in his Senate Judiciary Questionnaire, which would have prevented the Senate from thoroughly examining this issue.

Now more than ever, it is critical for our nation's top law enforcement officer to uphold the law and administer justice fairly for every individual in this country, including American Muslims. This is particularly true given the divisive rhetoric that surfaced during the election cycle, and because so many members of the upcoming administration have demonstrated strong bias against Islam and Muslims. As described above, Senator Sessions has closely aligned with anti-Muslim hate groups, accepted their awards and accolades, and publicly praised their leadership. Senator Sessions' appointment will only embolden these groups and activists and serve to further fan the flames of anti-Muslim bigotry already burning in this country.

Thank you for considering our views. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Madihha Ahussain by phone at 415-692-4932 or email at madihha@muslimadvocates.org.

Respectfully,

Alliance for Justice
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Arab American Institute
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Capital Area Muslim Bar Association
Center for Media Justice
Center for New Community
Color Of Change
Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago
EmergeUSA
Free Press
Georgia Association of Muslim Lawyers
The Interfaith Center of New York
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

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MoveOn.org Civic Action
Muslim Advocates
Muslim Bar Association of New York
Muslim Community Network
Muslim Justice League
Muslim Public Affairs Council
NAACP
NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc.
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
National Immigration Law Center
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Network for Arab American Communities
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
NIAC Action
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
People For the American Way
South Asian Bar Association of North America
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Southern Poverty Law Center