



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 115th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 163

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2017

No. 25

House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MEADOWS).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 13, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MARK MEADOWS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

HONORING PERRY C. MCGRUFF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOHO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. YOHO. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, February 2, 2017, Gainesville, Florida, and the State of Florida lost a favorite son in Mr. Perry C. McGriff. Perry was an icon in my hometown of Gainesville, Florida, and was known for his strong civic duty in helping people wherever and whenever they needed it.

Perry was born in Arcadia, Florida, in 1937, and went to school at the University of Florida, where he became an

all-star standout in both Gators football and baseball. His contributions on the field earned him entry into the prestigious Hall of Fame as a Gators Great in 1969.

Perry was married to his wife, Noel, for 57 years, raised four children—Jana, Mark, Keith, and Matthew—and enjoyed the joy and laughter of their 15 grandchildren.

A tremendous family man, Perry was also successful in business. He was an insurance agent for 48 years. He had the honor of being the youngest person ever elected as mayor of Gainesville, and he was a representative for the State of Florida.

He was a tireless volunteer and doer in Gainesville, receiving countless awards and recognition for his community service. Two of those particularly stick out to me. He received the first ever Ethics in Business Award and the Service Above Self Award, given by the Gainesville Rotary for his lifetime of service. In addition to his time, Perry donated more than 60 gallons of blood and set an example for all to follow.

For all the things Perry was and all the good things Perry did, I will always remember him most for his smile, his great attitude, and his notorious reputation to have his camera at the ready. He was always snapping pictures of people enjoying life and making sure to send to each individual a copy so they could remember the happy moments in the life that he captured.

To Noel and the McGriff family, thank you for sharing Perry's time. Thank you for sharing your husband and father with all of us. We will miss him forever, but we will never forget Perry. All of us, the city of Gainesville, the State of Florida, and I are all better for having known Perry.

STANDING STRONG AGAINST NORTH KOREA

Mr. YOHO. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, North Korea said it had successfully completed the launch of a new ballistic missile. The Pukguksong-

2, a medium-range ballistic missile, was test-fired on Sunday. The actions by the North Korean regime are unacceptable and in clear violation of the U.N. Security Council.

It is imperative that the U.S. stand strong with Japan, South Korea, and all of our allies in the region against the provocative and threatening actions of the North Korean totalitarian regime. It is a regime that is determined to thumb their nose at the world by advancing their nuclear capabilities, thus threatening their neighbors, the region, and for that matter, the world.

The United States and its world partners must continue to persuade North Korea to adhere to the U.N. Security Council resolutions or they choose to invite worldwide sanctions upon them. This is North Korea's decision and nobody else's.

CORETTA SCOTT KING LETTER TO SENATE JUDICIARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter and statement by Coretta Scott King from March 19, 1986.

THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CENTER FOR NONVIOLENT SOCIAL CHANGE, INC.,

Atlanta, GA, March 19, 1986.

Re Nomination of Jefferson B. Sessions, U.S. Judge, Southern District of Alabama Hearing, March 13, 1986.

Hon. STROM THURMOND,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR THURMOND: I write to express my sincere opposition to the confirmation of Jefferson B. Sessions as a federal district court judge for the Southern District of Alabama. My professional and personal roots in Alabama are deep and lasting. Anyone who has used the power of his office as

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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United States Attorney to intimidate and chill the free exercise of the ballot by citizens should not be elevated to our courts. Mr. Sessions has used the awesome powers of his office in a shabby attempt to intimidate and threaten elderly black voters. For this reprehensible conduct, he should not be rewarded with a federal judgeship.

I regret that a long-standing commitment prevents me from appearing in person to testify against this nominee. However, I have attached a copy of my statement opposing Mr. Sessions' confirmation and I request that my statement as well as this letter be made a part of the hearing record.

I do sincerely urge you to oppose the confirmation of Mr. Sessions.

Sincerely,

CORETTA SCOTT KING.

STATEMENT OF CORETTA SCOTT KING ON THE NOMINATION OF JEFFERSON BEAUREGARD SESSIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT, SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ALABAMA—SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE, THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 1986

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE: Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to express my strong opposition to the nomination of Jefferson Sessions for a federal district judgeship for the Southern District of Alabama. My longstanding commitment which I shared with my husband, Martin, to protect and enhance the rights of Black Americans, rights which include equal access to the democratic process, compels me to testify today.

Civil rights leaders, including my husband and Albert Turner, have fought long and hard to achieve free and unfettered access to the ballot box. Mr. Sessions has used the awesome power of his office to chill the free exercise of the vote by black citizens in the district he now seeks to serve as a federal judge. This simply cannot be allowed to happen. Mr. Sessions' conduct as U.S. Attorney, from his politically-motivated voting fraud prosecutions to his indifference toward criminal violations of civil rights laws, indicates that he lacks the temperament, fairness and judgment to be a federal judge.

The Voting Rights Act was, and still is, vitally important to the future of democracy in the United States. I was privileged to join Martin and many others during the Selma to Montgomery march for voting rights in 1965. Martin was particularly impressed by the determination to get the franchise of blacks in Selma and neighboring Perry County. As he wrote, "Certainly no community in the history of the Negro struggle has responded with the enthusiasm of Selma and her neighboring town of Marion. Where Birmingham depended largely upon students and unemployed adults [to participate in non-violent protest of the denial of the franchise], Selma has involved fully 10 per cent of the Negro population in active demonstrations, and at least half the Negro population of Marion was arrested on one day." Martin was referring of course to a group that included the defendants recently prosecuted for assisting elderly and illiterate blacks to exercise that franchise. In fact, Martin anticipated from the depth of their commitment twenty years ago, that a united political organization would remain in Perry County long after the other marchers had left. This organization, the Perry County Civic League, started by Mr. Turner, Mr. Hogue, and others, as Martin predicted, continued "to direct the drive for votes and other rights." In the years since the Voting Rights Act was passed, Black Americans in Marion, Selma and elsewhere have made important strides in their struggle to participate actively in the electoral process. The number of Blacks registered to

vote in key Southern states has doubled since 1965. This would not have been possible without the Voting Rights Act.

However, Blacks still fall far short of having equal participation in the electoral process. Particularly in the South, efforts continue to be made to deny Blacks access to the polls, even where Blacks constitute the majority of the voters. It has been a long uphill struggle to keep alive the vital legislation that protects the most fundamental right to vote. A person who has exhibited so much hostility to the enforcement of those laws, and thus, to the exercise of those rights by Black people should not be elevated to the federal bench.

The irony of Mr. Sessions' nomination is that, if confirmed, he will be given life tenure for doing with a federal prosecution what the local sheriffs accomplished twenty years ago with clubs and cattle prods. Twenty years ago, when we marched from Selma to Montgomery, the fear of voting was real, as the broken bones and bloody heads in Selma and Marion bore witness. As my husband wrote at the time, "it was not just a sick imagination that conjured up the vision of a public official, sworn to uphold the law, who forced an inhuman march upon hundreds of Negro children; who ordered the Rev. James Bevel to be chained to his sickbed; who clubbed a Negro woman registrant, and who callously inflicted repeated brutalities and indignities upon nonviolent Negroes peacefully petitioning for their constitutional right to vote."

Free exercise of voting rights is so fundamental to American democracy that we can not tolerate any form of infringement of those rights. Of all the groups who have been disenfranchised in our nation's history, none has struggled longer or suffered more in the attempt to win the vote than Black citizens. No group has had access to the ballot box denied so persistently and intently. Over the past century, a broad array of schemes have been used in attempts to block the Black vote. The range of techniques developed with the purpose of repressing black voting rights run the gamut from the straightforward application of brutality against black citizens who tried to vote to such legalized frauds as "grandfather clause" exclusions and rigged literacy tests.

The actions taken by Mr. Sessions in regard to the 1984 voting fraud prosecutions represent just one more technique used to intimidate Black voters and thus deny them this most precious franchise. The investigations into the absentee voting process were conducted only in the Black Belt counties where blacks had finally achieved political power in the local government. Whites had been using the absentee process to their advantage for years, without incident. Then, when Blacks, realizing its strength, began to use it with success, criminal investigations were begun.

In these investigations, Mr. Sessions, as U.S. Attorney, exhibited an eagerness to bring to trial and convict three leaders of the Perry County Civic League including Albert Turner despite evidence clearly demonstrating their innocence of any wrongdoing. Furthermore, in initiating the case, Mr. Sessions ignored allegations of similar behavior by whites, choosing instead to chill the exercise of the franchise by blacks by his misguided investigation. In fact, Mr. Sessions sought to punish older black civil rights activists, advisors and colleagues of my husband, who had been key figures in the civil rights movement in the 1960's. These were persons who, realizing the potential of the absentee vote among Blacks, had learned to use the process within the bounds of legality and had taught others to do the same. The only sin they committed was being too successful in gaining votes.

The scope and character of the investigations conducted by Mr. Sessions also warrant grave concern. Witnesses were selectively chosen in accordance with the favorability of their testimony to the government's case. Also, the prosecution illegally withheld from the defense critical statements made by witnesses. Witnesses who did testify were pressured and intimidated into submitting the "correct" testimony. Many elderly blacks were visited multiple times by the FBI who then hauled them over 180 miles by bus to a grand jury in Mobile when they could more easily have testified at a grand jury twenty miles away in Selma. These voters, and others, have announced they are now never going to vote again.

I urge you to consider carefully Mr. Sessions' conduct in these matters. Such a review, I believe, raises serious questions about his commitment to the protection of the voting rights of all American citizens and consequently his fair and unbiased judgment regarding this fundamental right. When the circumstances and facts surrounding the indictments of Al Turner, his wife, Evelyn, and Spencer Hogue are analyzed, it becomes clear that the motivation was political, and the result frightening—the wide-scale chill of the exercise of the ballot for blacks, who suffered so much to receive that right in the first place. Therefore, it is my strongly-held view that the appointment of Jefferson Sessions to the federal bench would irreparably damage the work of my husband, Al Turner, and countless others who risked their lives and freedom over the past twenty years to ensure equal participation in our democratic system.

The exercise of the franchise is an essential means by which our citizens ensure that those who are governing will be responsible. My husband called it the number one civil right. The denial of access to the ballot box ultimately results in the denial of other fundamental rights. For, it is only when the poor and disadvantaged are empowered that they are able to participate actively in the solutions to their own problems.

We still have a long way to go before we can say that minorities no longer need be concerned about discrimination at the polls. Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans and Asian Americans are grossly underrepresented at every level of government in America. If we are going to make our timeless dream of justice through democracy a reality, we must take every possible step to ensure that the spirit and intent of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Fifteenth Amendment of the Constitution is honored.

The federal courts hold a unique position in our constitutional system, ensuring that minorities and other citizens without political power have a forum in which to vindicate their rights. Because of this unique role, it is essential that the people selected to be federal judges respect the basic tenets of our legal system: respect for individual rights and a commitment to equal justice for all. The integrity of the Courts, and thus the rights they protect, can only be maintained if citizens feel confident that those selected as federal judges will be able to judge with fairness others holding differing views.

I do not believe Jefferson Sessions possesses the requisite judgment, competence, and sensitivity to the rights guaranteed by the federal civil rights laws to qualify for appointment to the federal district court. Based on his record, I believe his confirmation would have a devastating effect on not only the judicial system in Alabama, but also on the progress we have made everywhere toward fulfilling my husband's dream that he envisioned over twenty years ago. I therefore urge the Senate Judiciary Committee to deny his confirmation.

I thank you for allowing me to share my views.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday, Senator ELIZABETH WARREN sought to bring to the attention of the Senate some material about an Attorney General nominee, Senator Jeff Sessions. She was silenced. She persisted. Ultimately, the RECORD of the Senate does not reflect the remarks she was trying to give.

In particular, Senator WARREN was trying to bring to the attention of the Senate a statement and letter of Coretta Scott King from 1986. In 1986, then Jefferson B. Sessions was a U.S. Attorney, a Federal prosecutor who had been appointed for a position as a U.S. district judge.

At that time, Coretta Scott King wrote to the then-chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator Strom Thurmond. While the Senate may not entertain these remarks and while the Senate may stifle a United States Senator, this is the people's House and it is appropriate that the RECORD of this House, at least, reflect the comments of Coretta Scott King.

So I would like to use the time remaining to read her cover letter from March 13, 1986, and to read excerpts from the statement she attached to it.

“Dear Senator Thurmond:

“I write to express my sincere opposition to the confirmation of Jefferson B. Sessions as a federal district court judge for the Southern District of Alabama. My professional and personal roots in Alabama are deep and lasting. Anyone who has used the power of his office as United States Attorney to intimidate and chill the free exercise of the ballot by citizens should not be elevated to our courts. Mr. Sessions has used the awesome powers of his office in a shabby attempt to intimidate and frighten elderly black voters. For this reprehensible conduct, he should not be rewarded with a federal judgeship.

“I regret that a long-standing commitment prevents me from appearing in person to testify against this nominee. However, I have attached a copy of my statement opposing Mr. Sessions' confirmation and I request that my statement as well as this letter be made part of the hearing record.

“I do sincerely urge you to oppose the confirmation of Mr. Sessions.”

The statement attached to that letter is fairly long and very convincing, and I will read parts of it here:

“Mr. Sessions has used the awesome power of his office to chill the free exercise of the vote by black citizens in the district he now seeks to serve as a federal judge. This simply cannot be allowed to happen. Mr. Sessions' conduct as U.S. Attorney, from his politically-motivated voting fraud prosecutions to his indifference toward criminal violations of civil rights laws, indicates that he lacks the temperament, fairness and judgment to be a federal judge.”

“A person who has exhibited so much hostility to the enforcement of those laws, and thus, to the exercise of those

rights by Black people should not be elevated to the federal bench.

“The irony of Mr. Sessions' nomination is that, if confirmed, he will be given life tenure for doing with a federal prosecution what the local sheriffs accomplished twenty years ago with clubs and cattle prods.”

“The actions taken by Mr. Sessions in regard to the 1984 voting fraud prosecutions represent just one more technique used to intimidate Black voters and thus deny them this most precious franchise.”

“In these investigations, Mr. Sessions, as U.S. Attorney, exhibited an eagerness to bring to trial and convict three leaders of the Perry County Civic League including Albert Turner despite evidence clearly demonstrating their innocence of any wrongdoing.”

“In fact, Mr. Sessions sought to punish older black civil rights activists, advisors and colleagues of my husband, who had been key figures in the civil rights movement in the 1960's.”

“Therefore, it is my strongly-held view that the appointment of Jefferson Sessions to the federal bench would irreparably damage the work of my husband, Al Turner, and countless others who risked their lives and freedom over the past 20 years to ensure equal participation in our democratic system.”

Clearly, if these criticisms set forth in this statement—the entirety of which will be made part of the House Record—indicate, as they did to the United States Senate in 1986, that Mr. Sessions should not be a district court judge, they also argue that he should not have been confirmed as Attorney General of the United States.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 10 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SMITH of Nebraska) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: We give You thanks, O God, for giving us another day.

During this Black History Month, we are made aware again of the history that has formed our Nation and affects us still. With the craft of mass communication and the skill of good teachers and of artists, You have brought to life again powerful stories of African-American heroes, scholars, artists, and outstanding leaders throughout our Nation's history.

Much of this artistry, delightful spirit, strong determination, and hard work, was inspired by religious faith in You and the promise of the Holy Bible and, in recent decades, for many, the Holy Koran. Their witness to undying hope and peaceful resolution carry the hope of forming a better United States forever.

Lord, we praise and thank You for the African-American communities across this landscape who have shared our past, bless our present, and endow our future with hope, laughter, memorable music, and other contributions to our common good. Bless them, and bless our Nation with peace and reconciliation.

And here, in the people's House, may all that is done be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. POE of Texas led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESIGNATION FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following resignation from the House of Representatives:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
February 10, 2017.

Hon. PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER RYAN: In order to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services in President Donald J. Trump's administration, I hereby resign my seat in the United States House of Representatives effective 9:00 AM on February 10, 2017.

Please see the enclosed letter to the Honorable Nathan Deal, Governor of the State of Georgia.

Yours truly,

THOMAS PRICE, M.D.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
February 10, 2017.

Hon. NATHAN DEAL,
Governor, State of Georgia,
Atlanta, GA.

DEAR GOVERNOR DEAL: In order to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services in President Donald J.