

JULIA STERGAS, BELLOWS FREE ACADEMY
FAIRFAX SENIOR (FINALIST)

Nearly 260 years ago our country endured a war over the rights of our states and the rights of its peoples. From this war came the first legislation to protect African Americans living in the United States. One-hundred years later, our country faced another revolution, resulting in new legislation that enhanced the ability for African Americans to participate in political and social life. Since then, many Americans have believed that racial equality has been achieved.

But here we are, fifty years later, struggling through yet another conflict over the divide between black and white. Tensions are high between African Americans and white authority figures in the United States. Distrust and anxiety separates black Americans from their government and onlooking citizens. In 2014, Michael Brown was shot and killed by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. That same year, a barrage of negative media emerged from an originally peaceful protest in Baltimore, Maryland, depicting unlawful rioters who looted and set fire to business, injuring six police officers. Now, we continue to watch video clips on nightly news highlighting the struggle between black and white. Through this our attention has been distracted from the true cause of continued racial conflict: the lack of recent successful intervention.

White authority figures are perpetually distrusted by the black community, and groups such as Black Lives Matter still believe inherent biases against African Americans are abundant in society. We must rebuild this connection. To achieve comprehensive change we must redirect our nation's path. The first step toward action is awareness. This issue must be introduced into schools, universities, and community centers. If we can enlighten young adults they will share their knowledge and work to obtain equality nationwide.

Educators would lead discussions on current and historic racial tensions in a non-partisan, open environment. Focusing on historic and current events and their social and political ramifications, these open debates would promote civic engagement and thoughtful problem solving. Prompts regarding the government's involvement and the responsibilities it should assume, the action we as the nation's youth should assume, and opportunities to develop individual solutions would be considered during discussion. Our young population is critical to the future of our nation, so it is necessary that we provide them with opportunities to immerse themselves in their political and social world.

Today's generation and the ones to follow will be our leaders and our visionaries. Incorporating awareness into education programs would introduce these leaders to the nuances of the world they will come to inspire, and allow them to develop an understanding of their political efficacy. Raising consciousness of this racial strain would encourage young leaders to take charge of their futures, and ours, and incite change. It is critical to the well being of our nation that we cultivate a generation of educated young adults who possess the skills to maneuver themselves in their political and social world. Addressing our nation's imperfection and coaching our youth will only be the start to a nationwide revolution of change and acceptance.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:02 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 46. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of Fort Ontario in the State of New York.

H.R. 339. An act to amend Public Law 94-241 with respect to the Northern Mariana Islands.

H.R. 374. An act to remove the sunset provision of section 203 of Public Law 105-384, and for other purposes.

H.R. 381. An act to designate a mountain in the John Muir Wilderness of the Sierra National Forest as "Sky Point".

H.R. 538. An act to redesignate Ocmulgee National Monument in the State of Georgia and revise its boundary, and for other purposes.

H.R. 558. An act to adjust the boundary of the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park to include the Wallis House and Harriston Hill, and for other purposes.

H.R. 560. An act to amend the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area Improvement Act to provide access to certain vehicles serving residents of municipalities adjacent to the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, and for other purposes.

The message further announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 1928a, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the United States Group of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly: Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia and Ms. FRANKEL of Florida.

The message also announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2903, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Member of the House of Representatives to the Japan-United States Friendship Commission: Mr. TAKANO of California.

The message further announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2761, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Member of the House of Representatives to the British-American Inter-parliamentary Group: Mr. CICILLINE of Rhode Island.

The message also announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 3003, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe: Mr. HASTINGS of Florida and Mr. COHEN of Tennessee.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-653. A communication from the Director, Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to spending limits; to the Committee on the Budget.

EC-654. A communication from the Federal Register Liaison Officer, Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Changes to Certain Alcohol-Related Regulations Governing Bond Requirements and Tax Return Filing Periods" (RIN1513-AC30) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 18, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-655. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-656. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Task Force, received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 19, 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-657. A communication from the General Counsel, United States Access Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Standards and Guidelines" (RIN3014-AA37) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 17, 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-658. A communication from the General Counsel, United States Access Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Guidelines for Transportation Vehicles" (RIN3014-AA38) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 17, 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-659. A communication from the General Counsel, United States Access Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Standards for Accessible Medical Diagnostic Equipment" (RIN3014-AA40) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 17, 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-660. A communication from the Secretary of the Board of Governors, U.S. Postal Service, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-661. A communication from the Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) Quarterly Report to Congress; First Quarter of Fiscal Year 2017"; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

EC-662. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Exchange of Flatfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area" (RIN0648-XF010) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 12, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Ms. MURKOWSKI for the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

*Ryan Zinke, of Montana, to be Secretary of the Interior.

*James Richard Perry, of Texas, to be Secretary of Energy.

By Mr. ALEXANDER for the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

*Elisabeth Prince DeVos, of Michigan, to be Secretary of Education.

By Mr. RISCH for the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

*Linda E. McMahon, of Connecticut, to be Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session on January 31, 2017, at 2:30 p.m. in room SH-219 of the Senate Hart Office Building.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Commander Dan Hurd, U.S. Coast Guard, a fellow in my office, be granted floor privileges for the remainder of the week.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all time during recess or adjournment of the Senate count post-cloture on the Tillerson nomination; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the remaining post-cloture time be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROGRAM

Mr. RUBIO. The Senate is about to adjourn.

Under the standing order, we will convene at 12 noon tomorrow. Following the prayer and pledge, we will resume consideration of the Tillerson nomination post-cloture.

For the information of all Senators, the post-cloture time on the Tillerson nomination will expire at approximately 2:30 p.m. Eastern Time tomorrow, and the Senate will vote on confirmation at that time.

VOTE ON MOTION TO ADJOURN

Mr. RUBIO. I move to adjourn.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to adjourn.

The motion was agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands adjourned until 12 noon tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 8:01 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, February 1, 2017, at 12 noon.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate January 31, 2017:

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ELAINE L. CHAO, OF KENTUCKY, TO BE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION.