

American people. She has contributed millions of dollars to Republican politicians over the years and probably thought that was the only qualification that she needed. We need to prove to the American people that she is wrong.

I take my responsibility under the U.S. Constitution to provide advise and consent to the President very seriously, and I know my colleagues here in the Senate do so as well. Given Mrs. DeVos's weak performance in her interview before the American people and her inability to demonstrate a basic understanding of key education concepts, I do not think we can give her a passing grade.

As Senators, we do not operate under a model of social promotion under which we pass an unqualified individual to a higher office simply because they showed up. Perhaps this is why Mrs. DeVos's nomination is expected to see the most bipartisan opposition to her confirmation of all of the President's nominations to date.

Mrs. DeVos's response regarding IDEA during her confirmation hearing was not the only response that I found alarming. As the father of two college-age daughters, I am extremely concerned about ensuring that our college campuses provide safe environments where students can learn and grow.

I was shocked by a recent comprehensive report done by one school that found that over 20 percent of female undergraduates experienced unwanted sexual contact. Sadly, this problem is not confined to one school. It is a public safety and health crisis that we must immediately take action to address.

The Department of Education has taken important first steps to combat the prevalence of campus sexual assault by opening investigations in over 200 schools and publishing guidance to ensure that universities are affording students title IX protections, the freedom from discrimination on the basis of sex and freedom from sexual violence.

Mrs. DeVos apparently has a different reaction to the threats many young students face while pursuing their higher education. As we saw during her confirmation hearing, she said it is "premature" for her to say if she will choose to uphold the Department of Education's guidance on preventing sexual violence. This is completely unacceptable to me as a Senator representing over 500,000 undergraduate students attending one of Michigan's outstanding colleges and universities, and this is completely unacceptable to me as a father.

It is also unacceptable in the eyes of over 1,000 graduates of the same school in Michigan that Mrs. DeVos attended herself: Calvin College. Calvin College alumni from the class of 1947 to the class of 2020 sent my office an extensive petition expressing their deep concern with Mrs. DeVos's nomination. In their letter, these alumni presented several

reasons they oppose Mrs. DeVos's confirmation. Specifically, they expressed concerns that she does not understand or support the many Federal policies—like IDEA and title IX—that she would be required to enforce. They wrote: "This is especially concerning given that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and title IX, which ensure that all students' educational experiences are free of discrimination that impede learning, are not of value to Mrs. DeVos." I cannot agree more with her fellow alumni.

My office has received over 8,000 calls in opposition to the nomination of Betsy DeVos, and I am sure my colleagues have also heard from thousands of their own constituents all across this country. The American people are making their voices heard, and they are telling the Senate that Mrs. DeVos is not the right choice to lead the Department of Education. I urge my colleagues to listen to their constituents who are forcefully—forcefully—rejecting Mrs. DeVos's misguided vision for neighborhood public schools in America.

I will be standing with the people of Michigan, and I once again call on my colleagues to join the bipartisan opposition to Mrs. DeVos's nomination. Our children's future depends on it, and for their sake, please vote no.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I believe Betsy DeVos is going to be an excellent Secretary of Education.

#### NOMINATION OF JEFF SESSIONS

Mr. President, I have been fortunate enough to get to know JEFF SESSIONS over the past 20 years. Not only is he a colleague whom I admire and respect, he is also one of my very best friends. I actually suffered through with him back when he had a nomination that was rejected by this body many years ago.

As you know, Senator SESSIONS has been nominated by the President to be the next Attorney General of the United States. It is an incredible honor. There is no doubt in my mind that my friend will be perfect for the job. He is more than qualified for this position, and I know he will keep his word when he says he plans to uphold the laws we pass in Congress.

Senator SESSIONS was elected to the Senate in 1997. That was 2 years after I was elected, and we have been very close friends ever since. For 20 years now, we have known each other and worked alongside each other on both the Senate Armed Services Committee and the Environment and Public Works Committee. Those are the two major committees we have been on. He is seated just to my right in each one of the committees, and, as the Chair knows, you get to know a person pretty well when you have been sitting there for these 3- or 4-hour-long meetings. So we have had that relationship with each other.

Not only have we worked together, but we have also traveled and prayed together. You really get to know someone when you work, travel, and pray together. When working, a person's mind is revealed; when traveling, a person's character is revealed; and when you pray, the person's heart is revealed. I have come to know Senator SESSIONS as a God-fearing family man who puts others before himself and has a deep respect for the rule of law.

Family man—every time he has a grandchild, his wife and my wife talk about our competing grandchildren.

He helps those in need and makes sure that the legal system is protecting our citizens and holding criminals accountable.

A person only needs to look at the legislation and causes he has championed to know him. He played a key role in fighting for fairness and funding for the rural HIV/AIDS patients when negotiating a reauthorization of the bipartisan Ryan White CARE Act. His advocacy brought funding to low-income, mostly African-American women who did not have easily accessible health care before. Senator SESSIONS has been an author and supporter of many pieces of bipartisan legislation, including protecting victims of child abuse, reducing prison sentences for those who are unfairly targeted, and helping the families of our fallen military personnel.

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator SESSIONS has become a fierce advocate for keeping our country safe from terrorism, and he understands the risks we face. In fact, Senator SESSIONS is tough on crime and is well suited to oversee Federal law enforcement activities and to assist local governments in their efforts.

Violent crime has recently been increasing. Furthermore—and I just found this out—the shooting deaths of police officers has increased by 68 percent just in the last year, between 2015 and 2016. That is pretty remarkable. These trends are unacceptable, and Senator SESSIONS has pledged to reverse the course by strengthening the partnership between Federal and local law enforcement and by going after drug traffickers, aliens who violate the laws, and criminals who use guns to commit crimes.

There is no question that Senator SESSIONS is qualified to do what he says he will and what the job asks of him. He served as a U.S. attorney for Alabama's Southern District, and he was also Alabama's attorney general, so he clearly knows the job. He doesn't have to be trained. It is because of his previous experiences that he will be able to transition from a partisan legislator to our Nation's top law enforcement officer with great ease.

Countless groups of people have come out to support the nominee: the Fraternal Order of Police, the National Sheriffs' Association, former U.S. attorneys, a former FBI Director, current

State attorneys general, and many more. All of the law enforcement professionals are behind him, and there is a reason for it: It is because that is his record, and people are aware of it.

So I would like to take a minute to point out that it is cruel and unfair that people have tried to paint a picture of Senator SESSIONS as someone and something he is not. I think this is something that needs to be said.

The man the opposition has painted does not exist. You all know JEFF SESSIONS. You know that the awful things being said about him are completely false. In fact, back in 1981, the Ku Klux Klan ordered the tragic, extremely undeserved murder of a young African-American man by the name of Michael Donald. Because of Senator SESSIONS's help and support, these Klan members were convicted and given either life sentences or the death penalty. That is JEFF SESSIONS. Furthermore, he later played a major role in the destruction of the Ku Klux Klan in Alabama when he helped bring a civil suit against them. As a result, the KKK went bankrupt, and he caused them to fall apart in that region. Again, those were JEFF SESSIONS' efforts.

Before we vote on the confirmation of our friend and colleague, I ask that you all take a moment to seriously reflect how Senator SESSIONS has worked diligently with you over the past two decades and how perfectly qualified he is for this position.

As for me, I thank him for his tireless efforts in Congress, for his friendship, and for his fellowship. He will go down as one of the truly great U.S. Attorneys General in this country's history.

Mr. President, there are a lot of other nominees whom I have gotten to know. I had an experience of actually going to Trump Tower and getting to know some of the people who advise him. As I looked around the table, I saw people who were the right kind of people in health care, the right kind of people in energy, and the right kind of people in the military to give him advice in areas he might not have been exposed to in the past.

And I just noticed that it has been very slow. I was not aware of this until a few minutes ago, that apparently the Cabinet confirmations are the slowest since George Washington. This is something that is really wrong. You can criticize someone, but after a while, you just go ahead and you know the votes are there, and you make sure that you go ahead and do it.

#### NOMINATION OF NEIL GORSUCH

Mr. President, I would say this to the Presiding Officer, since he and I are both from Oklahoma, which is in the Tenth Circuit: Last week President Trump announced that he was nominating Judge Neil Gorsuch of the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals to be a U.S. Supreme Court Justice. As someone who had been following the news and rumors of who the pick would be—I had been looking into potential nomi-

nees for weeks—I was pleased to see Judge Gorsuch's name come up because we know something about him.

After the untimely death of Justice Scalia a year ago, it was clear that the Presidential election would be about the direction of the Supreme Court for the next generation or maybe even generations. With the results of the election—the Republican President and Republican Congress—the American people have entrusted us to confirm a Supreme Court Justice who will adhere to the rule of law and will not try to read between the lines when interpreting legislation or the Constitution. With the selection of Judge Gorsuch, I believe President Trump has picked such a Justice. The President might not know or remember, but George W. Bush nominated Judge Gorsuch to his current position, and the Senate confirmed him unanimously by voice vote. We went back and looked at the record, and no one voted against him.

There is no question that Judge Gorsuch is qualified for the Supreme Court. He is a graduate of Columbia University, Harvard Law School, and Oxford. He clerked for Judge Sentelle of the U.S. court of appeals for the DC Circuit. He clerked for Supreme Court Justices Byron White and Anthony Kennedy, so he knows the job. There is no need for on-the-job training for him.

He has been in private practice. He has been a principal deputy to the Associate Attorney General and Acting Attorney General at the U.S. Department of Justice.

Much like the Justice he has been nominated to replace, Judge Gorsuch has become known for his writing style. One of his former law clerks said that his "favorite aspect of the judge's writing is his ability to humanize disputes."

It appears that Gorsuch has more in common with the late Justice Scalia than just writing abilities. He has said that "assiduous focus on text, structure, and history is essential to the proper exercise of the judicial function." That judicial philosophy has been borne out in his record on the Tenth Circuit.

My home State of Oklahoma is within the Tenth Circuit jurisdiction, so we know him very well. Oklahoma is the home of Hobby Lobby. Everyone is familiar with what Hobby Lobby is. A lot of people don't realize this, but it started out when I was in the State legislature. The Greens, who have Hobby Lobby, started out in their garage. At that time, they were putting together things that they could frame—miniature picture frames and that type of thing. With a loan of \$600, David and Barbara Green began making miniature picture frames.

Today, Hobby Lobby is the largest privately owned arts and crafts store in the world, with over 700 stores in all but three States. They are people of faith, and when they were facing fines under ObamaCare for not providing certain insurance coverage that vio-

lated their faith, they were faced with an impossible choice. They took it to court, risking millions of personal dollars in doing so.

In siding with Hobby Lobby against ObamaCare's contraceptive mandate, Judge Gorsuch stressed the point that it is not for a court to decide whether the owners' religious convictions are correct or consistent, but instead the court's role is "only to protect the exercise of faith," and the Supreme Court agreed.

Again, Judge Gorsuch defended the religious beliefs of the Little Sisters of the Poor in his dissent of the Tenth Circuit's refusal to rehear their case against the Obama administration regarding the same mandate that Hobby Lobby was contesting.

Time and again, Judge Gorsuch has defended religious expressions in public space. In addition to defending the First Amendment protections regarding the free exercise of religion, he is also skeptical of the idea that agencies should be given a wide latitude when interpreting statutory language. In a recent opinion, Judge Gorsuch suggested that the precedent of the judiciary to give deference to agencies on statutory interpretations limits the courts when reviewing the legality of agency actions. Gorsuch believes it is for Congress to write the laws, the executive to carry them out, and the judiciary to interpret them, just as our Founding Fathers intended.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to move Judge Gorsuch's nomination forward. He is going to be confirmed, and he will make a great Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Senator from Michigan.

**MS. STABENOW.** Mr. President, before my colleague from Oklahoma leaves the floor, while we disagree on this current debate in terms of voting, I just have to say when I see him that I constantly thank him for his efforts last year to work with us for the community of Flint. We are finding some hope in terms of replacing and addressing the lead contamination, and without the distinguished Senator from Oklahoma, that literally would not have happened. We have things we disagree on and agree on, and this one—coming together with the families of Flint, particularly with the children and the water impacts—he will always have a warm place in the hearts of all of us who care deeply about that issue. I thank my colleague very much.

Mr. President, I want to speak today about the nomination of Betsy DeVos. Betsy DeVos's nomination is very personal to many people who live in Michigan because Betsy DeVos is from Michigan, and her vision of education and her actions have unfortunately played a major role in undermining our public schools.

Families all across our State can tell the story of her work with Michigan