

every single day, and it is never the case that we will find any among us, even colleagues, with whom we agree most of the time who are going to agree with us 100 percent of the time. So I urge my colleagues to put aside any policy differences they might have with Senator SESSIONS when considering his nomination and when deciding how they are going to vote in response to his nomination, because those simply are not relevant to his job and, at a minimum, ought not to be disqualifying factors relevant to his job.

As to independence, some of my colleagues doubt that Senator SESSIONS will be an independent voice at the Department of Justice. Respectfully, I can say with full confidence that anyone who actually knows Senator SESSIONS knows that he is fiercely independent-minded. He never shies away from expressing his closely held, sincerely developed views on any issue, even when political pressure might suggest a different course of action be in order. It is clear that SESSIONS will apply his independent-mindedness to his job after he is confirmed as Attorney General of the United States.

During his testimony before the Judiciary Committee, he repeatedly outlined the importance of having an independent Attorney General, and he explained how he would fulfill this obligation, how he would become precisely such an Attorney General, one who would exercise a degree of independence and not simply be a rubber stamp.

For example, he told us that every Attorney General “understands, I think, that if a President wants to accomplish a goal that he or she believes in deeply, you should help them do it in a lawful way but make clear and object if it is an unlawful action.” He described that role—being able to tell the President “no,” that is—as “the ultimate loyalty to him.”

He testified: “I hope that President Trump has confidence in me so that if I give him advice that something can be done or cannot be done, that he would respect that.”

Sessions also explained that if the Attorney General were asked “to do something plainly unlawful, he cannot participate in that. He or she would have to resign ultimately before agreeing to execute a policy that the Attorney General believed would be unlawful or unconstitutional.” Senator SESSIONS made this point repeatedly. He made it with great emphasis and in such a way that it is unmistakably clear to me that this is the Attorney General he would aspire to be and that he would in fact become after being confirmed.

Now, some may argue that you cannot necessarily trust his testimony because no Attorney General nominee would declare an intention to be a rubberstamp to the nominated President. Others may argue that Senator SESSIONS was too involved in the Trump campaign to be impartial. This is one of those points that you either

believe or don't believe. You can't reason your way to an answer. You have to know the person.

So I urge my colleagues to reflect on their experiences with Senator SESSIONS. If I know one thing about him, he is not a “yes” man. If I know one thing about him, it is that of all the people with whom I have served in the Senate, he is one of the very last who I would ever expect in any context to sell out his sincerely held views on the basis of political expediency. Instead, Senator SESSIONS takes his professional responsibility very seriously.

When he was a lawyer, he took seriously his obligations to his client and the law. As a Senator, he has taken seriously his obligations to the people of the State of Alabama. I know he will do the same thing at the U.S. Department of Justice.

He told us that “the Attorney General ultimately owes his loyalty to the integrity of the American people and to the fidelity of the Constitution, and the legislative laws of the country.” This demonstrates that Senator SESSIONS understands, as any good lawyer does, that every lawyer has a client, and you understand how best to represent that client and that client's interest. You have to understand the nature of the attorney-client relationship. You have to know who the client is, you have to know how to interact with that client, and you have to be willing to push back on that client, even when—especially when—it is difficult, because that is the job of the lawyer. The obligations incumbent upon the lawyer provides that the lawyer sometimes has to push back on the client.

At the end of the day, it seems to me that some of my colleagues perhaps just want an Attorney General who will be openly, affirmatively, presumptively, perennially hostile to the President's agenda. Now, that has never been the standard, and it is not a workable way of arranging the executive branch of the U.S. Government. The President should be allowed to assemble his or her team so long as the President picks people who are qualified, people who are willing and able to fulfill their constitutional responsibility, and people who do not have anything disqualifying in their backgrounds that would suggest that they cannot be trusted with this type of very substantial responsibility. Senator SESSIONS plainly satisfies these criteria.

So I support Senator SESSIONS' nomination. I do so wholeheartedly. I do so, I would add, with a somewhat heavy heart, knowing that as we take this step and confirm Senator SESSIONS as the next Attorney General of the United States, we will be losing a colleague—not just any colleague but a colleague that has been a dear friend to me, who has been a kind mentor and a good example to me at every stage of my service in the Senate. He has done this not only when we have agreed, but

he has done this especially when we have disagreed. That is what I love so much about Senator SESSIONS—that he has taught me much about how to get along with and respect people who sometimes reach different conclusions than I reach on my own.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, in accordance with Public Law 93-618, as amended by Public Law 100-418, on behalf of the President pro tempore and upon the recommendation of the chairman of the Committee on Finance, appoints the following members of the Finance Committee as congressional advisers on trade policy and negotiations to International conferences, meetings and negotiation sessions relating to trade agreements: the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN), and the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW).

The Chair announces, on behalf of the majority leader, pursuant to the provisions of Public Law 114-196, the appointment of the following individuals to serve as members of the United States Semiquincentennial Commission:

Members of the Senate: the Honorable TOM COTTON of Arkansas, and the Honorable PATRICK TOOMEY of Pennsylvania.

Private Citizens: Cathy Gillespie of Virginia, Daniel DiLella of Pennsylvania, Lucas Morel of Virginia, and Tom Walker of Alabama.

Mr. LEE. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. HARRIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. HARRIS. Mr. President, my parents met when they were graduate students at the University of California, Berkeley, in the 1960s when they were active in the civil rights movement. In fact, my sister and I joke that we grew up surrounded by a bunch of adults who spent their full time marching and shouting for this thing called justice.

I was part of only the second class to integrate Berkeley, CA, public schools almost two decades after the U.S. Supreme Court declared that separate was inherently unequal in the great case of *Brown v. Board of Education*—a case, I might add, that was supported by an amicus brief from the then U.S. Attorney General.

In fact, it was the lawyers in *Brown v. Board of Education*—Thurgood Marshall, Charles Hamilton Houston, and Constance Baker Motley—who inspired me at a young age to become a lawyer.

Simply put, it is likely that had the U.S. Supreme Court not decided the

way it did in *Brown v. Board of Education*, I would not be standing here as a Member of the U.S. Senate.

So then, as a direct beneficiary of landmark rulings by the U.S. judicial system and the American judicial system, I am acutely aware of the lasting and profound impact our courts can have on the everyday lives of Americans. It is with a deep sense of respect and admiration for the role of our justice system that I rise to oppose the nomination of Senator SESSIONS to be the next Attorney General of the United States.

The mission of the Department of Justice is clear: "To enforce the law and defend the interests of the United States according to the law; to ensure public safety against threats, foreign and domestic; to provide Federal leadership in preventing and controlling crime; to seek just punishment for those guilty of unlawful behavior; and to ensure fair and impartial administration of justice for all Americans."

It is those words—"justice for all"—that best articulate the spirit behind our judicial system.

I am a career prosecutor. In fact, I started my work as a young deputy district attorney in the Alameda County District Attorney's Office. That office was once led by U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren. Every time I filed a case, it would never read with the name of the victim versus the name of the defendant. It always read "the people" versus the defendant because in our democracy, in our great judicial system, we have rightly said a harm against any one of us is a harm against all of us, especially because we know that harm is most often directed at some of the most vulnerable and voiceless among us. So we rightly have declared that as a civil society, we will not require them to fight alone. We will stand with them. Justice for all.

This point is what raises my question of whether this nominee can fulfill the role and responsibility of this job. Let's be clear. This is not a debate about a President's nominee. It is not simply a debate about a President's nominee. This is a debate about the fundamental ideals of our country—ideals that date back to the founding of our country and those great words we spoke in 1776: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness."

All men are created equal, with unalienable rights. In other words, President Lincoln was fulfilling the promise first made in the Declaration of Independence, a promise that made clear the basis for legal equality derives not through a right that is given but from natural rights—rights that have been endowed upon us by our Creator; rights that cannot and should not be taken away or given up.

So let us recognize that civil rights are not given through the enactment of

a law or the publication of a court decision. Rather, our inherent civil rights are fulfilled when we guarantee them through the implementation and enforcement of the law.

Well-meaning people indeed can argue over the best means to ensure our fundamental rights, but it is crucial that we do not allow ourselves to be drawn into a suggestion that enforcing civil rights is favoring one group over another. Protecting civil rights is not about taking care of someone else. It is in our common interests. It is in each of our self-interests.

Liberty for each of us depends on liberty for all of us. It is just like the Department of Justice's mission, which articulates in those three words, "justice for all."

This is the Department's charge. It is its mission, and the next Attorney General of the United States must use his powers as a prosecutor to uphold it.

This brings me to the troubling and, frankly, unacceptable record of the nominee for this office. It is the U.S. Department of Justice that is charged with enforcing the rights of those trying to cast a ballot, but Senator SESSIONS cheered the Supreme Court's decision to gut the Voting Rights Act, used his power as a U.S. attorney to prosecute three African-American Civil Rights activists in Alabama, and then called the NAACP "un-American."

It is the U.S. Department of Justice that addresses systemic inequalities that we know, unfortunately, still exist in our criminal justice system and have led to mass incarceration—but Senator SESSIONS led the opposition to bipartisan sentencing reform.

It is the U.S. Department of Justice that investigates and prosecutes crimes motivated by hate based on race, religion, gender, nationality, disability, or sexual orientation of its victim—but in the 1990s, when lawmakers worked to pass hate crime legislation after the brutal killing of Matthew Shepard, Senator SESSIONS was a vocal opponent.

It is the U.S. Department of Justice that uses the power of the prosecutor to protect women who have been victims of crime—but Senator SESSIONS voted no when both Democrats and Republicans came together to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act, which gives support and assistance to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, including members of our LGBT community.

It is the U.S. Department of Justice that defends that most fundamental right of freedom to worship—but it was Senator SESSIONS who was one of the most outspoken defenders of then-candidate and now-President Donald Trump's unconstitutional Muslim travel ban which, by the way, was roundly denounced by many of his fellow Republicans.

It is the U.S. Department of Justice that enforces Federal laws prohibiting employment practices that discriminate on the grounds of race, sex, reli-

gion, and national origin. But Senator SESSIONS has opposed the Paycheck Fairness Act, Lilly Ledbetter Act, and the Employee Non-Discrimination Act.

It is the U.S. Department of Justice that implements the Americans with Disabilities Act. But when both Democrats and Republicans worked to reauthorize the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which provides resources to children with special needs, Senator SESSIONS said that providing educational services for these children "may be the single most irritating problem for teachers throughout America today."

Whether you are the father of a special needs child in a classroom, a woman trying to earn fair pay, an African-American man in a voting booth, or a victim at a police station trying to report a crime, Senator SESSIONS has not been your advocate.

As a former U.S. Attorney General, the great Bobby Kennedy once said:

We must recognize the full human equality of all our people before God, before the law, and in the councils of government. We must do this, not because it is economically advantageous, although it is; not because the laws of God and man command it, although they do; not because people in other lands wish it so. We must do it for the single and fundamental reason that it is the right thing to do.

The right thing to do. That is what makes us special as a country. That is what makes us right. That is what makes us great—our values and our ideas. It is the belief that no matter who you are, whether young or old, rich or poor, gay or straight; whether you are a child from Oakland or a child from Birmingham; whether you came here by plane to escape the hardships of war and torture or by foot to build a better life; whether you have been the victim of gun violence or opioid addiction; whether you are paid less than others doing the same work or stopped at a red light because of the color of your skin, you deserve an Attorney General who recognizes the full human quality of all people.

It is what led Attorney General Herbert Brownell, when there was rampant voter discrimination and intimidation here in the United States, to create in the United States Department of Justice the Civil Rights Division, whose mission is to "uphold the civil and constitutional rights of all Americans, particularly some of the most vulnerable members of our society."

It is what led Attorney General William Rogers to forcefully demand the integration of an elementary school at the Redstone missile center in Alabama when the children of Black servicemen were being denied entry.

It is that commitment that led Bobby Kennedy to send 500 U.S. marshals to Oxford, MS, to escort a young Black man, James Meredith, to enroll at Ole Miss. It is what led U.S. Attorney General Elliott Richardson to resign rather than do the bidding of a corrupt President during Watergate.

It is what led my friend, Attorney General Eric Holder, to sue the State

of Arizona over SB 1070, a law that led to the unjust racial profiling of immigrants and to say that the U.S. Government would no longer defend a law that prevented LGBT Americans from expressing their love for one another.

It is what led Attorney General Sally Yates, on a Monday evening this month, to stand up and refuse to defend a Muslim ban.

More than most Cabinet positions, the U.S. Attorney General enforces the principles that are the founding of our country, but I have seen no evidence in his record or testimony that Senator SESSIONS will approach this office in furtherance of these noble ideals. The gains our country has made are not permanent, and it is incumbent on the Attorney General of the United States to fight for the civil rights of all people.

No one said it better than Coretta Scott King:

Freedom is never really won. You earn it and win it in every generation.

If Senator SESSIONS won't, then it is incumbent upon the rest of us to persist.

I urge my colleagues to vote no.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the nomination of Senator SESSIONS to be the next Attorney General. I believe one of the most important jobs of a U.S. Attorney General is to protect the people's right to vote.

In the tumultuous days of the early 1960s, on a hot afternoon, I watched on a grainy black and white TV as Dr. King delivered his memorable "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

His soaring, spiritually laced speech challenged us to commit our lives to ensuring that the promises of American democracy were available, not just for the privileged few but for "all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics."

"Now is the time," Dr. King urged, "to make real the promises of democracy." He stressed that a central promise made to the citizens in a democracy is the right to vote and to have that vote counted. He said: "We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote."

Half a century has passed, and our country has changed with the times, but one thing has not changed. The right to vote for "all God's children" in America is still under assault. Unbelievably, we are not so very far from

the problems of 1963. Despite the passage of time and landmark civil and voting rights legislation, five decades later there is still considerable voter suppression in this country.

In fact, several States have recently enacted restrictive laws cutting back voting hours on nights and on weekends, eliminating same-day registration, and basically making it harder for people to vote. Standing in between a citizen and the voting booth is a direct contradiction to the vision of equality put forth by our Founding Fathers. In 1776, they declared that all men were created equal, but many in our country had to wait another 94 years before the 15th Amendment to the Constitution granted citizens the right to vote—though not all citizens. Ratified in 1870, the amendment states: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

It still took another 50 years before women in America were allowed to vote. After her arrest for casting a ballot in the Presidential election of 1872, Susan B. Anthony delivered a number of speeches in Upstate New York on women's suffrage. In those speeches, she noted that the right of all citizens to vote in elections is key to a functioning democracy.

Specifically, one line from her speech stands out. "And it is a downright mockery to talk to women of their enjoyment of the blessings of liberty while they are denied the use of the only means of securing them by providing the democratic-republican government—the ballot."

After the passage of the 19th Amendment granting women the ballot, it took another 45 years before our Nation belatedly enacted the Voting Rights Act of 1965 intended to guarantee every U.S. citizen the right to vote. Does this principle really hold true in practice?

The continued voter suppression of which I speak may not be as blatant as it once was with Jim Crow laws and poll taxes and literacy tests and the like, but it is still very much with us.

In recent years, it is obvious that hurdles have once again been placed between the voting booth and the young and minority voters. A devastating blow was dealt by the U.S. Supreme Court when it gutted the Voting Rights Act in 2013. Our Nation's highest Court struck down a central provision of the law that was used to guarantee fair elections in this country since the mid-1960s, and that includes the guarantee of elections in my State of Florida since that time.

Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to protect our right to vote. It required States with a history of voter suppression to get Federal approval before changing their voting laws. And for nearly five decades, the

States had to prove to the Department of Justice why a change was necessary and demonstrate how that change would not harm voters.

In a 5-to-4 decision, the Court declared that part of the law was outdated. It essentially rendered a key part of the law void until a bitterly partisan and gridlocked Congress can come up with a new formula for determining which States and localities need advance approval to amend their right-to-vote laws. The majority justified its ruling in the Court by pointing out that we no longer had the blatant voter suppression tactics once used to disenfranchise targeted voters across the country. I vigorously disagree because removing much needed voter protections also prevents the Federal Government from trying to block discriminatory State laws before they go into effect. In essence, States and local jurisdictions are now legally free to do as they please.

In fact, just moments after the decision, the Texas attorney general said his State would begin "immediately" honoring local legislation that a fellow court had imposed "strict and unforgiving burdens" on many Texans attempting to cast a ballot.

As has been noted, the right to vote was not always given to all American adults, but our laws adjusted as we became a more mature and tolerant democracy. But the reverse is what has been happening in America today and especially in Florida.

Since the 2010 election, in addition to cutting back on early voting, North Carolina, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Florida have approved voting restrictions that according to some experts are targeted directly at reducing turnout among young, low-income, and minority voters who traditionally support Democrats.

One study by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law reviewed the crop of similar disenfranchisement laws that were enacted after the 2010 decision. All told, the center found that as many as 5 million Americans could be adversely affected by these voting laws, and there is a clear political impact as a result of these disenfranchisement laws.

Two University of Massachusetts professors conducted a study that found that there was a clear pattern associated with the voter restrictions in the various States. According to Keith Bentele and Erin E. O'Brien, States were more likely to pass limits on voting that elected those Republican Governors, those States that increased their share of Republican lawmakers, and those States that became more electorally competitive under Republicans.

In 2011, the Florida legislature and State officials reduced a number of early voting days. They reduced them from 2 weeks down to 8 days, including very conveniently canceling the Sunday right before the Tuesday election, a day that had historically seen heavy African-American and Hispanic voting.

State officials countered that registered voters would still have the same number of hours and that they could still vote early, only in 8 days instead of 2 weeks. Well, it didn't work out that way. Florida also made voting harder for people who had been recently moved to another county and had an address change, such as college students, after it subjected voter registration groups to penalties and fines for mistakes—voter registration, mind you, penalties, and fines if you didn't turn it in within a certain number of hours.

They were so burdensome that the League of Women Voters challenged the provision in Federal court and they won but not before Jill Cicciarelli, a Florida teacher, had helped her students preregister to vote and ended up facing legal troubles as the result of her well-intentioned public service. A schoolteacher, teaching a government class, getting her kids preregistered, so when they became 18, they could vote, and she got in trouble with the State of Florida. The New Smyrna Beach High School civics teacher unwittingly ran afoul of the State's new convoluted election law. Cicciarelli, it turned out, hadn't registered with the State before beginning the drive and didn't submit forms to the elections office within that short number of hours. "You're talking about a high-energy teacher who cares about her kids, cares about her community and cares about her country," is how the New Smyrna High School principal, Jim Tager, described the situation.

Thankfully, the Voting Rights Act allowed the Federal Government to go before a panel of Washington, DC, judges who found that Florida's 2011 reduction of early voting—which I have just chronicled—here is what the court said, "would make it materially more difficult for some minority voters to cast a ballot." As a result, Florida had to restore 96 hours of early voting.

Even with these added protections, the next election in 2012 was a fiasco. Lines outside the polling places were prohibitively long, with some people waiting up to 8 hours to cast their vote. I am not kidding the Senate. There were lines in Dade County, Miami Dade County, 7 and 8 hours. By the way, some of those lines, there wasn't a nearby bathroom. Faced with calls for extending poll hours, the Governor of Florida failed to do what its two Republican gubernatorial predecessors had done: extend voting hours in some of the most swamped polling places to give folks enough time to exercise their right to vote.

In fact, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology analysis found that in 2012, Florida had the Nation's longest waiting lines to vote at an average statewide of 45 minutes. More than 200,000 voters in Florida gave up in frustration because the lines were so long. They didn't vote that year. According to another analysis by Ohio State University, in the Orlando Sentinel, they are

the ones who came up with that 200,000 figure, and they aren't done yet.

As if the 2011 restrictions weren't enough, an elections official in Miami-Dade County, in 2012, said that restrooms would be closed to voters at polling sites in private buildings over a handicap access dispute, even though there were bathrooms in those private buildings where the polling place was. The State's top election official in 2012 also told one of our 67 local election supervisors not to allow voters to submit absentee ballots at remote dropoff sites. She, by the way, is a Republican supervisor of elections. She told the State Department Division of Elections to kiss off; that she was running the elections and she was going to make sure there were enough places around that county where, if they had an absentee ballot, it was going to be convenient for them to go and drop off that absentee ballot than having to take it miles and miles to one place, that the Division of Elections at the State level was telling them to go to that Supervisor of Elections. She knew what she had to do to make it easy for voters to vote, and she stuck to her guns.

At the same time, that same Division of Elections in the Department of State, denied a request from the city of Gainesville in a municipal election. They denied the request to use the University of Florida campus building for early voting. A move that was viewed by some—more than some—as an assault on student voting by making it more difficult for students to find a place to vote.

By then, I had asked the U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, for an investigation into the changes in Florida's voting law. In response, the Attorney General wrote to warn the Governor of Florida that the Justice Department would be "carefully monitoring" Florida's elections. "During your tenure, your State has repeatedly added barriers to voting and restricted access to the polls," the Attorney General wrote. "Whenever warranted by the facts and the law, we will not hesitate to use all tools and legal authorities at our disposal to fight against racial discrimination, to stand against disenfranchisement, and to safeguard the right of every eligible American to cast a ballot."

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the letter from the U.S. Attorney General to the Governor of Florida, dated July 21, 2014.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

OFFICE OF THE
ATTORNEY GENERAL,
Washington, DC, July 21, 2014.

Hon. RICK SCOTT,
Governor of Florida, The Capitol, Tallahassee,
FL.

DEAR GOVERNOR SCOTT: In recent years, I have heard from public officials and citizens of Florida expressing their deep concern that certain changes to Florida election law and

procedures have restricted voter participation and limited access to the franchise. Because the right to vote is one of our nation's most sacred rights, I strongly urge you to re-evaluate laws and procedures that make it harder for citizens to register and to vote so that all eligible Floridians can easily and without burden exercise their right to vote.

Generations of Americans took extraordinary risks and willingly confronted hatred and violence—including in your home state—to ensure that all American citizens would have the chance to participate in the work of their government. The right to vote is not only the cornerstone of our system of government—it is the lifeblood of our democracy. Whatever the precise contours of federal law, we each have a civic and moral duty to protect, and to expand access to, this right.

For this reason, I am deeply disturbed that during your tenure your state has repeatedly added barriers to voting and restricted access to the polls. For example, changes in 2011 significantly narrowed the early voting window that had previously enabled thousands of Floridians to cast ballots. As the three judge court in *Florida v. United States*, 885 F. Supp. 2d 299 (D.D.C. 2012), observed, the law threatened "a dramatic reduction in the form of voting that is disproportionately used by African-Americans" that would have made it "materially more difficult for some minority voters to cast a ballot than under the benchmark law," in part because the decreased opportunity for early voting would produce increased lines at the polls during the remaining hours. *Id.* at 333. Accordingly, the court refused to approve reduced early voting hours with respect to the five counties in Florida covered by the Voting Rights Act's preclearance provision.

Indeed, Florida's decision to reduce early voting opportunities in the 2011 legislation was widely recognized as a disaster. A report released by the Orlando Sentinel in January 2013 found that at least 201,000 Florida voters did not cast ballots on Election Day 2012 because they were discouraged by long lines at polling places. I am pleased that last year you signed legislation that restored early voting days. However, I have grave concerns that there remains a troubling pattern in your state of measures that make it more difficult, not easier, for Floridians to vote. For example, as part of the same 2011 law, the state imposed rules on organizations that helped register individuals to vote that were, in the words of a federal court, "harsh," "impractical," "burdensome," and "unworkable." *League of Women Voters of Fla. v. Browning*, 863 F. Supp. 2d 1155 (N.D. FL 2012).

Most recently, the federal courts have concluded that in 2012, Florida violated the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA) by conducting a systematic program to purge voters from its voter registration rolls within the 90-day quiet period before an election for federal office. In doing so, Florida used inaccurate and unreliable voter verification procedures that harmed and confused voters. *Arcia v. Fla. Sec'y. of State*, 746 F.3d 1273 (11th Cir. 2014).

Florida is one of just eleven states that continue to restrict voting rights even after a person has served his or her sentence and is no longer on probation or parole; and in 2011, you made it more difficult for individuals who have served their sentences to regain the right to vote by eliminating automatic restoration of rights for non-violent felons and requiring a five year waiting period before felons convicted of non-violent crimes can apply to have their rights restored. Approximately ten percent of the entire population is disenfranchised as a result

of Florida law. The justifications for denying citizens' voting rights for life, especially after they have completed their sentence and made amends, are unpersuasive. On the contrary: there is evidence to suggest that offenders whose voting rights are restored are significantly less likely to return to the criminal justice system. For example, a study recently conducted by a parole commission in Florida found that, while the overall three-year recidivism rate stood at roughly 33 percent, the rate among those who were re-enfranchised after they'd served their time was just a third of that.

And there are a number of other troubling examples involving recent changes:

In 2013, Florida Secretary of State Ken Detzner issued a directive to county officials who supervise elections stating that they should never solicit the return of absentee ballots at any place other than supervisors' offices. Many have expressed concern that this directive will significantly reduce the number of places to return an absentee ballot and will have a negative impact on citizens whose jobs, access to transportation, or addresses make it difficult to return ballots to supervisors' office which, especially in large counties, may be miles away.

This year, Gainesville, in an attempt to avoid the long lines that characterized the 2012 election, sought approval to use the University of Florida's student union as an early voting site. Secretary of State Detzner denied the request. As a result, it is more difficult for University of Florida students—who have to travel to alternative early voting locations miles off campus—to participate in early voting.

In April, it was reported that the Miami-Dade County Elections Department had a policy, according to an email from an Assistant County Attorney, "not to permit access to restrooms at polling sites on election days." As you know, in 2012, Miami-Dade County had some of the longest lines and waiting times to vote in the United States. Some voters reported waiting as much as six hours. Many of the people stuck in lines need to use bathroom facilities in order to remain in line and be allowed to vote.

Whether or not these changes would ultimately be found to violate specific federal laws, they represent a troubling series of efforts to limit citizens' ability to exercise the franchise. And I write to you today to make clear that the Department of Justice is carefully monitoring jurisdictions around the country—including throughout Florida—for voting changes that may hamper the voting rights we are charged with protecting. Whenever warranted by the facts and the law, we will not hesitate to use all tools and legal authorities at our disposal to fight against racial discrimination, to stand against disenfranchisement, and to safeguard the right of every eligible American to cast a ballot.

Sincerely,

ERIC H. HOLDER, JR.,
Attorney General.

Mr. NELSON. The Attorney General cited problematic actions of the Governor's chief elections official, including purging from the voter rolls suspected noncitizens—a move that eventually was blocked after outright opposition from county election supervisors.

So in light of this evidence and following a widespread public outcry, what do we do now? As we say, it may not be as obvious as poll tactics and all the other blockades to voting, as we have seen in the past, particularly by all of the marches and so forth during the 1970s civil rights era. It might not

be as obvious, but there are all these subtle attempts. So what do we do?

I submit that though the problem is complex, the answer is relatively simple. As Americans who cherish the right to vote, we must turn to those schemers and say: There is a promise of democracy that we will not allow you to break. We have an obligation to keep this promise of democracy for our children.

Congress may be dysfunctional, but we must continue to push lawmakers for a fix to the Voting Rights Act that the Supreme Court struck down on a 5-to-4 vote, a key provision. We ought to be making it easier to vote, not harder. I believe no one should have to wait more than one-half hour to vote.

So I joined with others a few years ago to introduce a bill in Congress aimed at making that standard 30-minute wait time based on the January 2014 recommendation of a bipartisan Presidential Commission on Election Administration. Keep in mind what President Johnson said a half century ago: "The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men."

Also remember what Dr. King said:

So long as I do not firmly and irrevocably possess the right to vote, I do not possess myself. I cannot make up my mind—it is made up for me. I cannot live as a democratic citizen, observing the laws I have helped to enact—I can only submit to the edict of others.

Don't we owe it to all our children the right to possess themselves if this is to be a truly free and fair democracy? I believe that two of the most fundamental rights in our democracy are the right to vote and the right to know whom you are voting for and the right to have the confidence that vote is going to be counted as you intended.

If that were not enough, just as concerning as the ongoing efforts to suppress certain votes in this country is the amount of undisclosed and unlimited money that is sloshing around in our campaigns.

The Supreme Court's 2010 decision in *Citizens United* has opened the floodgates and allowed the wealthiest Americans to spend unlimited amounts of money to influence our elections. Allowing such unlimited, undisclosed money into our political system is corrupting our democracy.

I have strongly supported several pieces of legislation, such as the Disclosure Act, to require groups who spend more than \$10,000 on campaign-related matters to identify themselves. Tell the people who is giving the money by filing a disclosure report with the Federal Elections Commission. But that is not what the Supreme Court decision required.

The American people have a right to know whom they are voting for—not just the name on the ballot but who is behind that name on the ballot. The

Supreme Court itself said that "transparency enables the electorate to make informed decisions and give proper weight to different speakers and messages."

I believe we as a Congress have a moral obligation—a moral obligation—to correct what has happened to our system and to ensure that our voters have the information they need to make an informed decision on election day.

So this Senator has spoken on two subject areas—the right to vote and the amount of undetectable, unannounced, undisclosed, and unlimited money in our elections. For these and many other reasons I have stated and have not stated and the reasons mentioned in these remarks, I will vote no on the confirmation for Attorney General.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, we are coming to the conclusion of weeks now of debate on the nominee to be the Attorney General of the United States, and we still have other debates to have on other people before this process ends. In fact, somebody observed this week that you have to go back to the very founding of the government, to the first administration of George Washington, to find a time when it has taken longer to put a Cabinet in place, and George Washington only had to find four people in a government that was just trying to establish itself. But we are taking a maximum amount of time on a Cabinet and a Presidential nomination that usually happen quickly.

There has traditionally been an understanding in our country that when the President is elected—the importance of the President being able to put his stamp on the government as quickly as possible. And eventually we will be able to say his or her stamp on the government. But up until now, Presidents have had that opportunity. I read somewhere that from President Garfield right after the Civil War through Franklin Roosevelt, that Cabinets—those were put in place in the first days of every one of those administrations, often even the very first day.

What we have seen in this debate is also the questioning of people's motives, not just their decisions. I don't quote Vice President Biden often, but one of the quotes I have heard him give often and one I have agreed with in all my time here is that it is appropriate to question somebody else's decisions in public debate, particularly when you are debating your colleagues, who have also been elected to these jobs as well, but it is frankly not appropriate to question their motives. When we start doing that, that is always a mistake.

When I was the whip in the House, I used to tell freshman Members of the House: You are going to enjoy this opportunity and be better at it while you are here if you can vigorously fight for what you are for but if you will also believe that in virtually 100 percent of

the cases, the person on the other side of that debate is as well motivated and as genuine as you are. You can be wrong and not be evil. You can be wrong and not be badly motivated.

You know, elections do have consequences. Every person we are talking with on this floor in this debate was elected to the Senate.

I think Senator SESSIONS will be confirmed Attorney General, so sometime later this week, one of our number will have been appointed to this job. But these are people who come to this process as the Constitution determines, and they serve here as representatives of both the State they represent and the Constitution and what it stands for.

In the case of Senator SESSIONS, we have a colleague who has been here for 20 years. Anybody who has been here less than that served every day of their time in the Senate with Senator SESSIONS. People who have been here longer than that have served all 20 years with Senator SESSIONS. I don't know how you can do that and not see the quality he brings to that job every day.

He and I have not always voted the same. In fact, there is probably no Member here with whom I have always voted the same. But he comes with a background of integrity.

He started as an Eagle Scout. I think he was a Distinguished Eagle Scout. I am not even sure I know the difference between an Eagle Scout and a Distinguished Eagle Scout; I thought all Eagle Scouts were distinguished. But starting even then, JEFF SESSIONS has always stood out a little above the crowd.

He has four decades of public service. In 1975, he became an assistant U.S. attorney in the Southern District in Alabama. Half a dozen years after that, he became the U.S. attorney in that district. He held that job for 12 years until he became the attorney general of Alabama. People trusted him to take that those responsibilities. In 1997, as I said, he came to the Senate.

He has been a senior member of the Judiciary Committee for some time now. He has worked across party lines, and he has done that in fights for justice and fights on behalf of the victims of crime and, frankly, on more than one occasion, fights to be sure that those accused of crimes also had their day in court, and after they had their day in court, it was Senator SESSIONS who was instrumental in leading the fight for the Fair Sentencing Act.

Senator SESSIONS was very involved in the Paul Coverdell act for forensic sciences to be sure that the evidence that was in court would be unassailable to every extent possible. He has been vigorous in wanting to be sure those accused of crimes had justice, as well as those who were the victims of crime.

When I came to the Senate, Senator COONS and I—a Democrat from Delaware and a good friend of mine. I am thinking about him in this week that his father passed away. When we came

to the Senate 6 years ago, we formed the Law Enforcement Caucus. Senator SESSIONS was a great supporter of that effort.

When we were able to reauthorize in the last Congress the Victims of Child Abuse Act—this is a law that provides Federal assistance to locations in virtually every State—22 in the State of Missouri—where kids who have been the victims of crime or a witness to crime have a place to go and get the information out of their lives that needs to get away from them so they can get on to the next thing that happens, a law that protects our most vulnerable children and is designed to hold the perpetrators of crimes on those children or crimes those children witness—allows that to be dealt with in the right way. Senator SESSIONS was a great advocate for that.

He has been endorsed by the major law enforcement associations of the country, as well as many of his colleagues. The law enforcement associations that say JEFF SESSIONS would be a good Attorney General are the Fraternal Order of Police, the National Sheriffs' Association, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, the Major Counties Sheriffs' Association, and the list goes on.

Then you get to the victims of crime groups who have endorsed Senator SESSIONS.

Five former U.S. Attorney Generals and one former FBI Director are on that list. They are saying that JEFF SESSIONS would be a good person—in the case of five of them—to hold the jobs they held, and they know more about that job than any of us do: Michael Mukasey, Alberto Gonzales, John Ashcroft, Bill Barr, Ed Meese III. All, along with FBI Director Louis Freeh, have endorsed JEFF SESSIONS for this job.

There has been some discussions of his relationship with African Americans. We have African-American endorsements from his State but also from the former Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice; our colleague TIM SCOTT, who will be here later this afternoon, and I intend to be here for his remarks; and Larry Thompson, the former Deputy Attorney General. These are people who know JEFF SESSIONS and know what he has to offer to that job.

It is a job of great responsibility. Seldom will we as Senators have an opportunity to confirm someone to that job or any other job that we know as well as Senator SESSIONS. We know his family. We know his recent addition of twin grandchildren to his family just a little over a year ago. We know how much he cares about them. We know the moments that he has reached out to each of us as we have had challenges or things we needed help with.

I think he will do a great job as Attorney General. I believe that will happen later today. I think the country and the Attorney General's office will

be in good hands late today when JEFF SESSIONS undoubtedly, I am confident, becomes the Attorney General.

I look forward to that vote later today and then getting on to the next nominee, Dr. PRICE, whom I served with in the House. Any discussion that there have not been ideas that were alternatives to the Affordable Care Act—people just have not been paying attention to Dr. TOM PRICE all the time he has been in the Congress or as budget director and haven't paid attention to him as a practicing physician. He is another great nominee at a time when we really need to set a new course.

We are going to see that happen in both the Attorney General's office and at HHS, and I look forward to what we do as those move forward.

I also look forward to what may not be the official maiden speech but what I think will be the first speech on the floor for our new colleague, JOHN KENNEDY.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I rise to support the nomination of JEFF SESSIONS to be the next Attorney General of the United States of America, and I would like to explain why.

It seems to me that most Americans don't care about the politics on Capitol Hill. They don't particularly care about the politics in the Senate, and they don't especially care about the politics in Washington, DC. Most Americans are too busy earning a living. These are the Americans who get up every day, they go to work, they work hard, they obey the law, they try to do the right thing by their kids, and they try to save a little money for retirement.

Most Americans I think are fair-minded, and most Americans are commonsensical. They understand that when they elect a President, the President can't do the job alone. He gets help, and he starts with appointing members of his Cabinet. Of course, the Senate has to provide advice and consent and confirm those appointees.

Most Americans understand that a President—whatever the President—is not going to pick his enemies to do that. He is not going to pick somebody he doesn't trust. He is not going to pick someone to advise him if he is not qualified. He is going to pick someone he is on friendly terms with. He is going to pick somebody who is competent. He is going to pick somebody who is experienced. That is what President Trump has done. That is what President Obama did. That is what Secretary Hillary Clinton would have done, had she been elected President.

Now, President Trump has nominated Senator JEFF SESSIONS. I recognize that not all Americans and not all Members of the Senate agree with his political positions. Some folks don't agree with his political party. Some folks don't like him because they don't like the person who appointed him. I

get that. Some folks may not even like the part of the country he is from. That is OK. This is America. In America, you can believe anything you want to believe, and as long as you don't hurt anybody, you can say it.

But it seems to me that no reasonable person, if they look at Senator JEFF SESSIONS' record, can argue that he is not qualified, if by qualified you mean that he has any potential to be a great Attorney General.

This is a man who has served as a State attorney general. This is a man who was a U.S. attorney not for 1 year or 5 years or 6 years. For 12 years he served as a U.S. attorney. This is a gentleman who has been a U.S. Senator for 20 years, three terms, and three times the good people of Alabama have sent JEFF SESSIONS to this body.

Most people here know him. They have had lunch with him. They have met his family. They have worked with him on bills. They have worked against him on bills. They know him, and they know he is qualified.

There has been a lot of discussion about whether Senator SESSIONS will respect the rule of law. He will. He understands the difference between making policy, as Congress does, and executing policy. I have no doubt whatsoever that Senator SESSIONS, as the next Attorney General, will be more than willing to enforce laws that he might not necessarily agree with.

There has been some discussion about Senator SESSIONS and the Bill of Rights. Senator SESSIONS understands the importance of personal liberty. I listened very attentively in the Judiciary Committee. He was asked a lot of questions about our Constitution. It is clear to me that Senator SESSIONS understands that the Bill of Rights is not for the high school quarterback. The Bill of Rights is not for the prom queen. The Bill of Rights is there to protect the unprotected, the man or woman in America who might want to do things a little differently. He understands that very, very clearly.

At some point, we all have to stop regretting yesterday, and we have to start creating tomorrow, and that is the point we are at.

I unconditionally support Senator JEFF SESSIONS to be the next Attorney General of the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, before I get into my speech regarding Senator SESSIONS, I wanted to talk a little bit about what occurred last night.

First, there is no doubt in my mind that the letter written by Coretta Scott King should be read by each and every Member of this Chamber. Regardless of whether you disagree with her conclusions, her standing in the history of our Nation means her voice should be heard. What I took issue with last night and the true violation of rule XIX in my eyes were the remarks

shared last night originally stated by Senator KENNEDY—not Coretta Scott King—Senator KENNEDY.

Whether you like it or not, this body has rules, and we all should govern ourselves according to the rules.

There is no doubt that last night emotions were very high, and I am not necessarily happy with where that has left us today. The Senate needs to function. We need to have a comity in this body if we are to work for the American people. This should not be about Republicans and Democrats. It is not about us; it is about the American people.

If we remember that point as we move forward, our Nation will be able to heal where we hurt. We will be able to disagree without being disagreeable. This should be the norm, not a unique experience in public discourse.

Before I decided to give this speech, I had the privilege last night around midnight of having to sit in the Chair and presiding. My good friend CORY BOOKER was making an eloquent presentation about where we are on issues of race in this Nation. He was talking about the South, and he was talking about the pain, the suffering, and the misery.

Today, as I want to share my thoughts on JEFF SESSIONS and how I have come to my conclusion, I thought it was important for me to not try to persuade people but to simply inform, because this issue is not simply the issue about our next Attorney General. This is really an issue about all of us—not all of us as Senators but all of us as members of the American family. This is an issue that digs deep into the core of our souls, deep into the core of our Nation, deep into who we can be, who we should be, and how we will get there.

So my objective here, as I speak, will not be to somehow persuade the other side that your decision is wrong. I don't think that is my responsibility nor my intention. My goal isn't even to persuade those who believe that JEFF SESSIONS will not be a good U.S. Attorney General that they are wrong. I simply want to share information. I want to share facts. I want to share, as Paul Harvey used to say, "the rest of the story," because if you read the news reports, you walk away with a clear picture based on facts but not necessarily a clear picture based on truth. There has been a distortion in many arenas, in many echo chambers about who he is and why I support him.

My good friend CORY BOOKER last night spoke about a true American hero, JOHN LEWIS. JOHN LEWIS is an American hero. I know that this may or may not be popular with everyone in the Chamber or everyone in America on the conservative side or the liberal side, but the reality of it is this. He was beaten within an inch of his life so that I would have the privilege—not to stand in the Chamber but—to vote, to simply vote.

We should all thank God for the sacrifices of men and women so that peo-

ple like myself, CORY BOOKER, and KAMALA HARRIS would be allowed one day not to simply vote but to serve in the most unique, powerful, and one of the most important legislative bodies in the world today. It is the sacrifices of men and women of color who fought against injustices. We stand as a nation on the shoulders of these giants. I know that I don't have to remind my mother or my family, but just as a reminder to those who are listening to the conversation, when I leave the Senate one day, I am still going to be Black, an African American—Black every day, Black every way, and there is no doubt.

This is an important part of the conversation because, as I read through some of the comments of my friends on the left, you will wonder if I ever had an experience as a Black person in America. I want to get to that in just a few minutes.

God, in His infinite wisdom, made me Black, born in Charleston, SC, for a purpose. I am blessed to be who I am, and I am equally blessed to be a Charlestonian. Our country, the South, and, specifically, my State have suffered through difficult and challenging times around the issue of race. My grandfather, who passed away at 94 years old last January, knew a very different South. I remember listening to him talking about his experiences of having to step off of the sidewalk when White folks were coming. He learned early in life: Never look a White person in the eyes. He was in his forties in the 1960s. His whole life view, his paradigm, was painted with a broad brush. Separation, segregation, humiliation, and challenges.

It was in my home city of Charleston where the Civil War began. It was in my home city of Charleston where nearly 40 percent of all the slaves that came to America would come through in Charleston, SC. It was a Charlestonian who came up with the concept written into our Constitution of three-fifths of a man—a Charlestonian.

But it was also Charlestonians who, in 2010 had a choice between Strom Thurmond's son and a young—I use that word liberally—African-American guy named TIM SCOTT.

The evolution that has occurred in the South could be seen very clearly on this day in Charleston. The very first shots of the Civil War were in Charleston. They gave me the privilege of representing them in Congress, over the son of Strom Thurmond, over the son and the namesake of one of the most popular Governors in South Carolina, Carroll Campbell, Jr. I thank God that the South Carolina that I have come to know, the South that I have had the experience to enjoy is a different South. It is a different Charleston than my grandfather knew in his 94 years. But my life has not been one of privilege, of promise.

As I said just a few nights ago, I was born into a single parent household, living in poverty, nearly flunking out

of high school. I have been called everything that you can think of from a racial perspective—good, not too often bad, very consistently. So I understand that there is room for progress. There is a need for us to crystallize what we are fighting about, who we are fighting for, and how we are going to get there.

This is an important day and an important issue, and the U.S. Attorney General is perhaps one of the most important decisions I will make about the Cabinet of President Trump. I will tell you that, for me, this has been a challenging journey, one that I have not taken lightly because, as I said earlier, I am going to be Black when I leave this body, and so when I think about some of the comments and some of the challenges for JEFF SESSIONS around the 1986 process, the trial of the KKK and the trial of the Turner family, an African-American couple—they were defendants he brought to court—I have heard it, and I wanted to know more about what it is we are talking about, not by reading it in the paper but by calling folks in Alabama, understanding with new eyes who JEFF SESSIONS is—not the guy I serve with but the guy who will have the most powerful position in law enforcement. I wanted to know firsthand who he was before he was nominated and how he would respond in a room filled with African-American leaders.

I and my best friend in Congress, TREY GOWDY, for a very long time throughout South Carolina have held meetings of African-American pastors and leaders coming together with law enforcement to try to bridge the gap that is obviously broken, bridge the gap that obviously exists between law enforcement and African-American leaders. So I brought JEFF SESSIONS down to see from a distance how he interacts with these African-American pastors, hear the tough questions on Walter Scott and other issues so I can have an appreciation and affinity of how the Justice Department under his leadership would act.

I take this responsibility seriously, and I wonder if my friends in the Chamber have had a chance to see what others think—not the political echo chamber, not the organization, but run-of-the-mill people.

So I had that experience, and I will tell you that without any question, the conclusion that I have drawn is a pretty clear conclusion. I am glad that I dug into the issue. I am glad I took the time to know JEFF SESSIONS the best I can from what I have read from 1986, what I saw in my own home city of Charleston, with a provocative history on race.

We are at a defining moment in our country, not because of the Attorney General, not because of the debate we are going through in this body, but because our country is being pulled apart from extremes on both ends. This is not healthy for our country. Too often, too many particularly on the right are found guilty until proven innocent on

issues of race, issues of fairness. I say that because, as I think about some of the comments that have come into my office over the last several weeks, I am used to being attacked. If you sign up to be a Black conservative, the chances are very high you will be attacked. It comes with the territory, and I have had it for 20 years, two decades. But my friends and my staff are not used to the level of animus that comes in from the liberal left who suggest that I somehow am not helpful to the cause of liberal America and therefore I am not helpful to Black America because they see those as one and the same.

I brought some of the pages of chats that I have from folks, the comments I get from Twitter about my support of JEFF SESSIONS:

Tracy V. Johnson sent in “Sen. Uncle Tim Scott.”

“Everyone from SC who happens to be a left winger knows that Tim Scott is an Uncle Tom. [“S”] is documented.” “S” is not for Scott; it is for fertilizer.

SGaut says: “A White man in a black body: Tim Scott backs Jeff Sessions for attorney general.”

Until 3 weeks ago the only African-American chief of staff in the U.S. Senate out of 100 was the chief of staff for a Republican. The second African-American chief of staff in the U.S. Senate is the chief of staff of a Republican. Yet they say of my chief of staff that she is “high yella,” an implication that she is just not Black enough.

I go on to read from folks who wanted to share their opinions about my endorsing JEFF SESSIONS:

“You are a disgrace to the Black race!”

Anthony R Burnam @BurnamR says: “You an Uncle Tom Scott aren’t you? Sessions. How does a black man turn on his own.”

Anthony B. from @PoliticalAnt says: “Sen. Tim Scott is not an Uncle Tom. He doesn’t have a shred of honor. He’s a House Negro, like the one in Jango.”

He also writes—I guess Anthony Burnam has been active on my Twitter feed—that I am “a complete horror . . . a black man [who is] a racist.”

“Against black people”

“Big Uncle Tom [piece of fertilizer]. You are a disgrace to your race.”

I left out all the ones that use the “N” word. I just felt that would not be appropriate.

You see, what I am surprised by, just a smidgeon, is that the liberal left that speaks and desires for all of us to be tolerant does not want to be tolerant of anyone who disagrees with where they are coming from. So the definition of “tolerance” isn’t that all Americans experience a high level of tolerance; it is all Americans who agree with them experience this so-called tolerance.

I am not saying this because it bothers me because, frankly, I have experienced two decades of this. You don’t necessarily get used to it, but you don’t find yourself as offended by it all.

I just wish that my friends who call themselves liberals would want tolerance for all Americans, including conservative Americans. I just wish that my liberal friends who are self-described liberal would want to be innocent until proven guilty and not guilty until proven innocent.

So back to my findings on JEFF SESSIONS. I brought JEFF SESSIONS to Charleston. And you can read about it in the Post and Courier, the local newspaper. The pastor said that JEFF SESSIONS was warm and friendly, engaging and competent.

Now, I will say that the response from the NAACP and the NAN, the National Action Network, about the meeting that I had with the African-American pastors—that it was outrageous that I would invite African-American pastors to meet with this guy and they didn’t have an invitation. So I invited two of their leaders. I didn’t tell anyone who was coming because I wanted folks to come into the room and make their own decisions and come to their own conclusions. They decided not to come. Maybe it was because a conservative invited them. I don’t know why. But I wanted everyone to have a chance, and they did. It was interesting.

Here are some other interesting facts that I have not seen often in the press, which I think is a very important point.

All of us who engage in conversations around this Nation about race and justice, to only have part of the story is just an unfortunate reality that we should get used to that I haven’t gotten used to. But the reality is, 50 years ago, in 1966, Senator SESSIONS campaigned against George Wallace’s wife for Governor. As a Senator, JEFF SESSIONS voted in favor of a 30-year extension of the Civil Rights Act. He was one of only 17 Republicans to support the first Black Attorney General, Eric Holder. He spearheaded the effort to award the Congressional Gold Medal to Rosa Parks, an Alabama native and civil rights icon.

As CORY BOOKER, my good friend from New Jersey, said last night as I presided, he and JEFF SESSIONS worked wonderfully well together in awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to the foot soldiers of the civil rights movement in Selma, AL.

Here is another part of the story that just hasn’t seemed to break through the threshold of our national media on JEFF SESSIONS’ support within the Black community. As I started making phone calls to leaders in Alabama who were Black and Democrats, I was very surprised at what I started hearing about JEFF SESSIONS. I will start with an Alabama native, Condoleezza Rice, who is not a Democrat but who is an Alabama native. She said: SESSIONS has worked hard to heal the wounds in Alabama brought on by the “prejudice and injustice against the descendants of slaves.”

Willie Huntley, an African-American assistant U.S. attorney under JEFF

SESSIONS, now an attorney in Mobile, AL, has known JEFF SESSIONS for more than 30 years and said in an interview that he has never encountered racial insensitivity from SESSIONS in the three decades they have known each other.

Alabama Senate Democratic leader Quinton Ross said of JEFF SESSIONS: "We have talked about things from civil rights to race relations, and I think anyone—once you gain a position like that, actually partnership has to go aside because you represent the United States and all the people. . . . I feel confident [JEFF SESSIONS] will be an attorney general that will look at it from all perspectives to just do what's right for the citizens of the United States."

That is from an African-American Democratic leader in the Alabama State Senate, Quinton Ross.

From former Obama administration Surgeon General Regina Benjamin: "I think he'll be fine. I consider him a friend. . . . At least he will listen as attorney general. My hope is that he'll do what is best for the American people."

Former Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson says this. Larry is 71 years old, so we are not talking about folks who grew up in my New South that I talked about earlier. Still we are working through it, but, boy, we have changed. This is a 71-year-old who says of JEFF SESSIONS: "He doesn't have a racist bone in his body." He said: "I have been an African American man for 71 years. I think I know a racist when I see one. JEFF is far from being a racist. He's a good person, a decent person."

Gerald Reynolds, former chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights: "During my discussions with Senator SESSIONS and his staff, it was clear that the senator has a strong interest in ensuring our nation's antidiscrimination laws are vigorously enforced. Senator SESSIONS is a man of great character and integrity, with a commitment to fairness and equal justice under the law."

Just a few more.

Fred Gray. Fred Gray is an iconic figure in civil rights, for those of us who may not be familiar with him. Fred Gray is an African-American civil rights attorney. He represented the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He represented Rosa Parks. He represented the Tuskegee men who were exploited in the syphilis experiment by the government. This is what he said in this letter from 2016:

What would be more noteworthy for the State of Alabama than having an Alabamian follow in the footsteps of the late Mr. Justice Hugo Black? Previously I have expressed appreciation for your acts herein stated. I look forward to working with you in any future capacity in which the Lord permits you to serve.

That is a quote from a letter that he wrote to JEFF SESSIONS.

We are talking about a hero of the civil rights era. We are talking about

the lawyer for Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and the Tuskegee men. We are not talking about someone who doesn't understand and appreciate the weight and the importance of civil rights in this Nation.

William Smith was hired as the first African-American Republican chief counsel to the Senate Judiciary Committee by JEFF SESSIONS. He said:

Jeff Sessions is a man who cared for me, who looked out for me, and who had my best interests in mind. So, anybody who says anything different simply doesn't know Jeff Sessions.

One last statement. This is an important one from my perspective.

I mentioned earlier that there was a case against a couple, the Turner couple, where JEFF SESSIONS was the prosecutor, and the Turners were being prosecuted for some voter rights issues. Interestingly enough, what you don't hear in the news, by the way, is that the case was brought by other African Americans in Alabama against an African-American couple, the Turners. This is from Albert Turner, Jr., the son of the two defendants in that case. He says:

While I respect the deeply held positions of other civil rights advocates who oppose Senator Sessions, I believe it is important for me to speak out with regard to Senator Sessions personally. First, let me be clear. Senator Sessions and I respectfully disagree on some issues. That won't change when he is the Attorney General of the United States. And I expect that there will be times, as it is with all politicians, when we will legitimately disagree and I will be required by my conscience to speak out. I look forward to those constructive debates, if necessary. However, despite our political differences, the Senator and I share certain Alabama and American values, including love of our State, its people, and our country.

I have known Senator Sessions for many years, beginning with the voter fraud case in Perry County in which my parents were defendants. My differences in policy and ideology with him do not translate to personal malice. He is not a racist. As I have said before, at no time then or now has Jeff Sessions said anything derogatory about my family. He was a prosecutor at the Federal level with a job to do. He was presented with evidence by a local district attorney that he relied on, and his office presented the case. That is what prosecutors do. I believe him when he says that he was simply doing his job.

JEFF SESSIONS has also worked on civil rights cases, including the KKK murderer Henry Hays in 1981.

JEFF SESSIONS worked with the Department of Justice attorneys, the FBI, county investigators, and the county district attorney to solve the murder of a 19-year-old African American, Michael Donald. SESSIONS and the U.S. Attorney's Office prosecuted "Tiger" Knowles as an accomplice, obtaining a guilty plea and a life sentence in Federal court. After hard investigative work, SESSIONS shifted the case of the KKK murderer Henry Hays to the State court where he received the death penalty, which was not available at that time at the Federal level.

USA v. Bennie Jack Hays is another successful case against the KKK that JEFF SESSIONS participated in.

In Conecuh County in 1983, JEFF SESSIONS joined in bringing the first lawsuit in the history of the Department of Justice to stop the suppression of African-American voting rights. In *United States v. Conecuh County*, the DOJ Civil Rights Division, along with JEFF SESSIONS, sued white Conecuh County election officials, including the chair of the local Republican Party.

Finally, Dallas County. In 1978, the Department of Justice used Dallas County, AL, to replace its at-large election system and go to a single-member district so that African Americans would have a better chance to be elected. JEFF SESSIONS supported it, the ACLU supported it, as did the DOJ's Civil Rights Division. They were successful.

Finally, on the criminal justice issue that I support, according to Senator DICK DURBIN, who said during the confirmation hearing that JEFF SESSIONS saved thousands upon thousands of years of Black men's lives because of his push to reduce the disparity between crack and powder cocaine from 100 to 1, to where it is today. JEFF SESSIONS even fought against the Bush administration to bring that disparity down.

In conclusion, as I reflect on the brave men and women who have shaped this country, who have fought for my freedom, for me to participate fully in this Republic—the greatest experiment of self-governing the world has ever known—we have an obligation to judge a man not by the color of his skin nor by the State of his birth, but by the story his life tells and by the content of his character.

JEFF SESSIONS has earned my support, and I will hold him accountable if and when we disagree moving forward.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I see the majority leader of the Senate. I will suspend until he has finished.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I just wanted to congratulate the Senator from South Carolina for a very, very meaningful and effective presentation on behalf of our colleague, Senator JEFF SESSIONS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I too wish to congratulate my colleague from South Carolina on his remarks. We don't share the same view on this, but he is an important voice in the Senate, and I am glad that he is a colleague on the Education Committee in the Senate.

As a matter of fact, the other day I said that I wish the President had the sense to appoint him Education Secretary. The kids whom I used to work for in the Denver Public Schools would have been very, very well served by him.

The President, of course, is entitled to choose his team, and that is partly

what elections are about. The Attorney General, more than any other Cabinet official, must be the people's lawyer, an advocate for the rule of law above all else.

My office has received nearly 23,000 calls and emails opposing this nomination. Many of them I cannot read today on the floor for fear of violating the Senate rules. But it is clear from these comments that young Coloradans who came to the United States and know no other country but this country, who arrived here illegally, but, through no fault of their own, fear they will be deported back to a country they don't know—it is clear to me from the comments that I have received in these letters that Coloradans in the LGBTQ community fear that an Attorney General SESSIONS would turn a blind eye toward discrimination. It is clear from these comments that Senator SESSIONS has not earned the confidence of many Coloradans who may soon rely on him to protect their rights and to identify abuses of constitutional power. And Coloradans, many of whom I know, fought for equality and justice during the civil rights movement, and fear that it will turn back much of the progress we have made.

We have a disagreement about Senator SESSIONS' role before he came to the Senate, but the fundamental reason I object to his nomination as Attorney General is that he led the fight in 2013 against our bipartisan effort to reform the broken immigration system in the United States. And I sat here on this Senate floor night after night after night listening to the Senator use fear and inaccuracies to derail our best chance in years to fix this broken immigration system.

Now, in time, I have come to understand that people come to this floor and they don't always—they are not always accurate in what they say. Sometimes they don't mean to be accurate; sometimes they are just mistaken. That was the first time I had ever heard that kind of relentlessness, saying things that just weren't right. I am being careful with my language because of last night's ruling.

He claimed that our bill—and, by the way, that bill, unlike almost anything that has happened in this place in the 8 years that I have been here—started out as a bipartisan effort, four Democrats and four Republicans working together for 7 or 8 months in a room trying to solve each other's issues.

There is a lot about the Senate today that the American people should not and cannot be proud of, and I will come to that in a minute. But as to the work of the Gang of 8, I would have been happy for people to have seen what happened behind closed doors in those 7 months. It is how the Senate ought to operate. It went to the Judiciary Committee where Democrats and Republicans together amended the legislation. They made it better. And then it came to the floor of the Senate and we had more amendments, and it passed with 68 votes.

It still hasn't passed the House. It has never even gotten a vote on the floor of the House of Representatives.

Senator SESSIONS claimed during that debate that our bill would have “dramatically increased incidence of criminal alien violence, officially legalizing dangerous offenders, while handcuffing immigration officers from doing their jobs.”

He claimed it would have legalized “thousands of dangerous criminals while making it more difficult for our officers to identify public safety and national security threats.”

Senator SESSIONS claimed our bill would lead to a “huge increase in immigration,” invite a flood of immigrants into our Nation who would steal jobs from “struggling American workers.”

These claims are demonstrably untrue. If our bill had become law, we would have secured our borders, we would have bolstered internal security, we would have better protected American workers, and we would have strengthened our economy.

Contrary to his characterization of what was in that bill, the 2013 bill provided far greater security than President Trump's plan.

The first two words in the title of that bill were “border security.” That has been completely ignored by the critics. It has been completely ignored by people who want to make an issue out of this in national campaigns. But the reality is it provided billions of dollars toward new technologies to monitor the border. It called for the building of a 700-mile fence. By the way, none of the rest of it would come to pass until we took care of the border.

Nearly 20,000 new Border Patrol agents—four times more than ordered by President Trump and double the current number—and not paid for by raising taxes on the American people at our border with Mexico, not paid for in a way that would destroy our trading relationship with Mexico, but paid for by fees that people were paying as they were becoming lawful in the United States of America. It had protections in the bill for American workers to ensure that employers hired American labor first. I know he objected to this, and I understand we had a difference of opinion, but the bill included a tough but fair path to citizenship, requiring people to go through background checks as part of a long path to citizenship.

During the Presidential campaign, Senator SESSIONS advised President-Elect, now-President Trump on immigration policy. In fact, my understanding is the President's immigration Executive orders—including one being challenged in court—mirror Senator SESSIONS' positions. These positions are antithetical to our history, to our values, to whom we are as a country.

Last Friday was the highlight of my year. I got on a plane and I left Wash-

ington—that was pretty good in and of itself—to go home to Colorado. On Friday, I went to Dunn Elementary School in Fort Collins, CO, where Kara Roth's fifth grade class welcomed 26 new Americans from 13 countries to the United States. It is an International Baccalaureate program in this elementary school. This is an annual event.

We were there in the gym, and the fifth graders were there singing; a young girl had won an essay contest on “What it Meant to be in America.” There was a color guard. Kids came in wearing their Boy Scout uniforms to post the colors, the American flag, and the flag of Colorado. The fourth graders were there watching what they would be doing next year as fifth graders.

There was no need for a politician to tell anybody in that room that America is an exceptional country. No politician needed to say that to the fifth graders in Mrs. Roth's class who were studying the Constitution and studying immigration. We certainly didn't need to tell that to the immigrants from all over the world. I think I mentioned, they were from 13 different countries.

One of the great parts of the ceremony was when they asked people to stand up to the country from which they came, and fifth graders also stood up if they were from that country. There were kids from China; there were kids from Mexico standing up in this fifth grade class; incredibly, three kids from Libya whose parents are at the university in some capacity in Fort Collins.

As always in these naturalization ceremonies, people had tears in their eyes because as one of them once said to me at another time in Colorado, his dream had come true the minute he became a citizen of the United States because he knew his children would be citizens of the United States of America. Everybody in the room knew that.

What is important for us is these fifth graders' perspective on American government, on democracy, and on the history of this Republic I think probably may not be quite exactly right because they, thank goodness, have been untarnished by special interests, untarnished by campaign money and partisan fighting, and power struggles that have nothing to do with the American people or their priorities.

Their view of what the essence of self-government is all about is really what it is all about. It is really what we are supposed to be doing here: a commitment to a republic and democracy, a commitment to the rule of law, a commitment to the separation of powers. The stuff they are reading in their little Constitution just like this one is what this place is supposed to be about. It is supposed to be what we are doing here. It is the reason why I am objecting to this nomination.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION AND THE JUDICIARY
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More than that, I feel compelled to talk a little bit about President