



The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate  
S230 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate  
S221 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary  
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary  
152 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Jan 30, 2017

Re: Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Organizations Oppose the Nomination of Jeff Sessions for Attorney General

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Feinstein:

The undersigned organizations that represent Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities write to urge you to vote against Senator Sessions for attorney general of the United States. Senator Sessions' poor record on civil and human rights, nativist view of immigration, and close relationships with white nationalist and anti-Muslim organizations make him unqualified and unfit to be the chief law enforcement officer of the United States.

We stand with organizations representing Black Americans, women, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, people with disabilities, and immigrants in our opposition to Senator Sessions' nomination and share their concerns that he will not enforce the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

While Asian Americans have been part of the fabric of American society for centuries, in recent years AAPIs have become the fastest growing minority group in the U.S., surpassing the rate of growth of the Latino population.<sup>2</sup> Today, 92% of Asian Americans are immigrants or the children of immigrants.<sup>3</sup> This tremendous growth in the AAPI population occurred only after the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act.

---

<sup>1</sup> See The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights organizational sign-on letter to Majority Leader McConnell, Democratic Leader Reid, Chairman Grassley, and Ranking Member Leahy dated Dec. 1, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Sanam Malik, Asian Immigrants in the United States Today, Center for American Progress (May 21, 2015) <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2015/05/21/113690/asian-immigrants-in-the-united-states-today/>.

<sup>3</sup> Second Generation Immigrants, Chapter 2: A Demographic Portrait of Adult Children of Immigrants, Pew Research Center (2013).

Senator Sessions has consistently expressed his opposition to, and raised alarmist concern regarding, patterns of immigration post-1965 – a watershed year in which the United States dismantled its explicitly racist national origin quotas (including the remaining vestiges of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and related anti-Asian immigration policies). This critical change in U.S. immigration policy finally allowed larger numbers of non-Europeans into the U.S., creating the diversity we see in America today. If not for the 1965 immigration act, the Asian American and Pacific Islander community as we know it would not exist.

Over the course of his twenty-year Senate career, Senator Sessions has been the standard bearer for a nativist vision of America, sounding the alarm regarding the “unprecedented” percentage of the American population that is foreign-born<sup>4</sup> – without regard for the fact that the current percentage is lower than during the late 1800s, when the foreign-born were overwhelmingly from Western Europe.

Senator Sessions has opposed every bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform bill to fix our broken immigration system that keeps families separated through intolerable backlogs, with especially long wait times for AAPI families. Furthermore, Senator Sessions has actively proposed immigration policies that would keep families separated. As recently as 2013, Senator Sessions proposed eliminating the immediate relative category for lawful permanent residence sponsorship; ending the ability of U.S. citizens to sponsor their parents, sons or daughters and the ability of lawful permanent residents to sponsor their sons or daughters; and eliminating the remaining provisions promoting diversity and a way for U.S. citizens to sponsor their siblings to come to the U.S.

Senator Sessions has also opposed the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. In his nomination hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Sessions said that he would not oppose ending the program, and that the precarious situation that DACA recipients are in should be resolved through legislation. This is an unsatisfactory answer given that he has consistently opposed the DREAM Act, which would provide a legislative solution. Nor has he supported the BRIDGE Act filed by Senators Durbin and Graham, which would essentially continue the DACA program through legislation. His answers related to confidentiality of DACA applicants’ information also gave us reason to be concerned that Senator Sessions would not oppose the use of DACA applicants’ information against them for immigration enforcement purposes. We find Senator Sessions’ position on DACA extreme and inhumane.

---

<sup>4</sup> Senator Sessions’ full quote states, “Nearly 59 million immigrants have arrived in the United States since 1965 and currently constitute a near record 14% of the U.S. population – this is a, reaching the largest proportion in history and will surge beyond that 14% unless law in the United States is changed – we are really on an extreme unprecedented pattern of immigration into the United States, I think it’s unlike most established countries in the world.” Hearing: “The Impact of High Levels of Immigration on U.S. Workers” Senate Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Immigration and the National Interest (March 16, 2016) <http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/meetings/the-impact-of-high-levels-of-immigration-on-us-workers>.

During Senator Sessions' nomination hearing, he was given the opportunity to disavow the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) whose founder, John Tanton, has expressed the view that America must retain its European-American majority.<sup>5</sup> Sessions chose not to do so. When asked about Tanton's statement, Sessions said that he did not agree with the statement. However, he did not disavow FAIR despite the fact that its president, Dan Stein, has also stated that supporters of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act wanted to "retaliate against Anglo-Saxon dominance" and that the policy is causing "chaos and will continue to create chaos."<sup>6</sup> In line with this sentiment, Senator Sessions has bemoaned the last 40 years as a period of "record, uncontrolled immigration to the United States."<sup>7</sup>

Senator Sessions was also given the opportunity to disavow the Center for Security Policy<sup>8</sup> and David Horowitz, both known proponents of anti-Muslim hate, but he chose not to. While claiming to be unaware that David Horowitz had made anti-Muslim statements,<sup>9</sup> Senator Sessions said of Horowitz that he is, "a most brilliant individual and has a remarkable story." Senator Sessions stated that he does not believe that "Horowitz is a racist or a person that would treat anyone improperly."

Relatedly, Senator Sessions has opposed bringing Syrian refugees to the U.S. At a 2016 hearing on Syrian refugees, Senator Sessions said that, "We have a right and a duty to favor the admission of immigrants who support and celebrate our pluralist western values... If we cannot ensure the adequate screening of any individual, we must not admit them to the United States. Period."<sup>10</sup> Senator Sessions has also indicated support for excluding Muslims from entering the United States as immigrants or refugees. Several senators asked Senator Sessions about whether he would ban Muslims from entering the U.S. He responded that

---

<sup>5</sup> John Tanton wrote in 1993, "I've come to the point of view that for European-American society and culture to persist requires a European-American majority, and a clear one at that." Tanton also founded the Center for Immigration Studies, whose staff have been called as favorable witnesses in hearings that Sessions has presided over. The Southern Poverty Law Center, Jeff Sessions: Champion of Anti-Muslim and Anti-Immigrant Extremists (November 18, 2016), <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/11/18/jeff-sessions-champion-anti-muslim-and-anti-immigrant-extremists>.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> A Memo For Republican Members From Sen. Jeff Sessions, [\*Immigration Handbook for the New Republican Majority\*](#).

<sup>8</sup> In 2015, Sen. Sessions accepted the "Keeper of the Flame" award from the anti-Muslim hate group the Center for Security Policy, whose leader Frank Gaffney has asserted his belief in the conspiracy theory that President Obama is Muslim, writing "...there is mounting evidence that the president not only identifies with Muslims, but actually may still be one himself." The Southern Poverty Law Center, Jeff Sessions: Champion of Anti-Muslim and Anti-Immigrant Extremists (November 18, 2016), <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/11/18/jeff-sessions-champion-anti-muslim-and-anti-immigrant-extremists>.

<sup>9</sup> David Horowitz has said, that "All the major Muslim organizations in America are connected to the Muslim Brotherhood," and, quote, "80 percent of the mosques are filled with hate against Jews and Americans."

<sup>10</sup> Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing, "Oversight of Administration's FY 2017 Refugee Resettlement Program," 24:28 (September 28, 2016).

he would not. However, Senator Sessions stated support for intensive vetting of people from countries with a “history of terrorism,” and questioning of Muslims’ religious beliefs.

We, as organizations representing Asian American and Pacific Islander communities are extremely troubled by Senator Sessions’ record of disenfranchising and denying the rights of people of color, immigrants, and Muslim communities. Senator Sessions, if confirmed, would be the chief law enforcement officer of the United States, charged with protecting the rights of all people in the United States as well as overseeing the immigration court system. His record makes him unfit for this role.

When Senator Sessions bemoans the state of immigration since the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, preferring the prior patterns of immigration that excluded people of most backgrounds, except Western Europeans, what our communities hear is that he does not want us here.

Given Senator Sessions’ anti-civil rights, anti-immigrant, and anti-Muslim record, we do not have faith that he will enforce the rights of all of our communities and all people in the United States. As such, we strongly encourage you to oppose his nomination.

Sincerely,

Asian Americans Advancing Justice

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Asian Law Caucus

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Atlanta

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Chicago

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Los Angeles

18MillionRising.org

API Equality – Northern California

API Equality – LA

Asia Pacific Cultural Center

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum

Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Bay Area (AABA)

Asian American Civic Association

Asian American Federation – South Region

Asian American Millennials Unite

Asian American Organizing Project

Asian American Resource Workshop

Asian Americans United

Asian Community Development Council

Asian Counseling and Referral Service

Asian Law Alliance

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO (APALA)

Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center



Asian Pacific Development Center  
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence  
Asian Services in Action  
Bhutanese Community of Houston  
Caribbean-American Advancement Foundation  
Center for Pan Asian Community Services  
Chinese Community Center of Houston  
Chinese for Affirmative Action  
Coalition for Asian American Children and Families  
Coalition of Concerned Nigerians in South Florida (CONSFL0)  
Coalition of Latino Leaders – CLILA  
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)  
Council on American-Islamic Relations – California Chapter (CAIR-CA)  
Democratic Women’s Club of Miami-Dade Chapter  
East Coast Asian American Student Union  
Ethnic Minorities of Burma Advocacy and Resource Center  
Fresno Center for New Americans  
Georgia Coalition for the People’s Agenda  
Hmong National Development (HND)  
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)  
Korean Resource Center  
MinKwon Center for Community Action  
MQVN Community Development Corporation  
National Alliance to Nurture the Aged and the Youth (NANAY CEDC)  
National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association  
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association – Hawaii  
National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse (NAPAFASA)  
National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum  
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)  
National Council of Asian Pacific Islander Physicians  
National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA)  
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)  
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA)  
National Tongan American Society  
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Alliance  
New Mexico Asian Family Center  
OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates  
OCA – South Florida Chapter  
Ohio Asian American Health Coalition  
Pacific Asian Counseling Services  
SEAC Village  
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)  
South Asian Bar Association of North America  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)



UPLIFT

Utah Pacific Islander Civic Engagement Coalition

Utah Pacific Islander Health Coalition

VAYLA New Orleans

Vietnamese American Bar Association of Georgia

Women Watch Afrika, Inc.

