



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

RESOLUTION NO. 170045

Introduced January 26, 2017

Councilmember Johnson

RESOLUTION

Calling on the United States Senate to reject U.S. Senator Jeff Sessions' nomination for the office of U.S. Attorney General.

WHEREAS, The Attorney General of the United States, as the nation's top law enforcement officer, must have a deep and abiding faith not only in the sanctity of the nation's laws but also in the underlying values upon which those laws are based. Perhaps most important of these values is the equality of all Americans, regardless of race, religion, or sexual orientation; and

WHEREAS, Over the past 8 years, DOJ has vigorously pursued potential discrimination cases and voting rights abuses, a priority that Sen. Sessions has indicated will not necessarily continue under his watch. During his confirmation hearing, Sen. Sessions said that the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was "intrusive," raising questions about the importance of this landmark legislation to the Attorney General nominee and the new administration; and

WHEREAS, Senator Sessions has also made dangerous and irresponsible statements on race. His nomination for a seat in the federal judiciary in 1986 failed in part because he had referred to the NAACP and other civil rights groups as "un-American" and accused these organizations of "forcing civil rights down the throats of people." His U.S. Senate voting record has not indicated a significant change in his stance on such issues. Indeed, his record on issues of civil rights has earned only a 10% approval from the NAACP; and

WHEREAS, While Senator Sessions professed in his confirmation hearings a laudable understanding of the danger that illegal guns pose to the public, his enthusiastic endorsement of harsh mandatory minimum sentencing as a panacea for these crimes is counterproductive to initiatives in the City of Philadelphia aimed at addressing the root causes of gun violence; and

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RESOLUTION NO. 170045 continued

WHEREAS, Sen. Sessions' positions on LGBTQ rights raise still more concerns about the Attorney General nominee's dedication to diversity, personal liberty, and the equal protection of the law. In 1996, then-Alabama Attorney General Sessions attempted to bar an LGBTQ conference from coming to the University of Alabama. In 2009, Sen. Sessions voted against legislation that was intended to extend hate crime protections to the LGBTQ community. The Senator is also a co-sponsor of the First Amendment Defense Act, which would prevent federal action against groups that refuse service on the basis of sexual orientation; and

WHEREAS, Senator Sessions' voting record and history of statements on immigration raise concerns about the nominee's dedication to the principles of America's multicultural and pluralistic society. Indeed, Senator Sessions has repeatedly attempted to pit middle-class and working families against immigrants of all nationalities. In an April 2015 opinion article published in the Washington Post, Senator Sessions placed blame for the decline in real income faced by American workers on the nation's newest immigrants, documented and undocumented alike; and

WHEREAS, Senator Sessions has called for defunding Fourth Amendment cities, like Philadelphia, that require a judicial warrant for the arrest and transfer of individuals who are suspected to be undocumented immigrants. The City of Philadelphia's efforts to ensure that all residents have access to vital City services, especially the Police, would be greatly hindered should the federal government seek to make local law enforcement accessory to federal immigration enforcement and move to push these immigrant populations underground; and

WHEREAS, Senator Jeff Sessions has demonstrated views that call into question his dedication to upholding the law equally for all citizens. Furthermore, his stances on several issues that are of vital importance to the City of Philadelphia are antithetical to the values that make our City great; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADLPHIA, That it hereby calls on the United States Senate to reject U.S. Senator Jeff Sessions' nomination for the office of U.S. Attorney General.