



Five Things to Know About Jeff Sessions' Testimony

This week the Senate will vote on the confirmation of Senator Jeff Sessions to serve as Attorney General of the United States. **Here are five things you need to know** from Jeff Sessions' testimony as the Senate prepares to vote on his nomination:

1. Senator Sessions apparently cannot see racism or admit that it exists.

Senator Sessions was unable to describe specific areas where “racial inequalities persist.” He also refused to disavow racist and unfounded statements made by David Horowitz, whom Sessions praised in his hearing testimony. Sessions refused to say whether he disavowed inflammatory statements like Black Lives Matter is “a racist group” and a “roving lynch mob.”

He also denied the existence of a racialized and unconstitutional policing culture, and took issue with key Department of Justice tools like pattern and practice investigations and consent decrees.

In fact although he spoke passionately about restoring “the morale of police officers,” in ten hours of testimony, Sessions never spoke about victims of discrimination – those, as Attorney General, he would be charged with protecting.

2. He continued to misrepresent his civil rights record

Despite affidavits and statements from the civil rights attorneys who actually litigated key cases Sessions listed on his questionnaire saying that they cannot recall any substantive involvement on the part of Jeff Sessions, Sessions continued to insist on taking credit for significant civil rights victories secured by other lawyers, claiming that his role was “equal to that of my five co-counsel.”

Perhaps more egregious was his touting using the power of his office as US Attorney to persecute voting rights activists, the “Perry County Three,” as a “voting rights case.” In an attempt to intimidate Black, mostly elderly voters, Sessions brought a flimsy case against voting rights activists who were helping voters with absentee ballots to increase Black turnout. Most charges were thrown out, and a jury acquitted the three on all other charges. This abuse of power even prompted [Coretta Scott King to write a letter](#) to the Senate Judiciary Committee opposing Sessions' nomination to a federal judgeship in 1986.

- 3. He demonstrated a breathtaking ignorance of the current state of voting rights law while failing to commit to continuing the participation of the Department of Justice in cases challenging voter i.d. laws that have been found to discriminate against minority voters.**

During his hearing, Sessions testified that “Voter ID laws properly drafted” are OK, despite several recent federal court rulings that these laws unlawfully discriminate against Black and Latino voters. He adheres to these views while being woefully uninformed, testifying that he hadn’t studied a [major Fifth Circuit decision](#) about Texas’ discriminatory law and was “not familiar with the details of the North Carolina law” that [the Fourth Circuit said](#) intentionally discriminated against African-American voters.

- 4. At a time when religious intolerance is on the rise, aided and abetted by the spate of executive orders from the White House, Sessions displayed a one-sided view of religious freedom.**

In a response to follow-up testimony, Sessions declined to commit to “defending the rights of Muslim Americans—as strenuously as those of any other faith—to be free from unduly burdensome, unreasonable, or discriminatory zoning, landmarking, and other land use regulations.” He also testified that he was “not sure” whether a Justice Department attorney who is “secular has... just as a good a claim to understanding the truth as a person who is religious.”

Indeed, as a United States Senator, Sessions advocated immigration and refugee policies shockingly similar to those set out in the President’s Executive Order.

- 5. He offered no assurances that he would protect the rights of LGBT Americans or women.**

When pressed for specifics about what laws protecting LGBT safety he would enforce, he offered no answer. He continued to advance the position that *Roe v. Wade* “violated the Constitution” and refused to say whether he would direct the DOJ to argue for overturning precedents protecting reproductive freedom.

To learn more, please [read the full letter](#) LDF prepared detailing the additional issues raised by Jeff Sessions’ testimony.

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