



February 28, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Sessions:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 200 national organizations committed to promoting and protecting the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, and the 130 undersigned national, state, and local organizations, we are writing to express our views on the factors we urge you to consider in selecting the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights.

The Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division was created by passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957, and this year marks its 60th anniversary. The Civil Rights Division and its eleven sections have the critical responsibility of enforcing our nation's federal civil rights laws. Its mission is to provide equal treatment and equal justice under the law by enforcing and defending the civil rights of all Americans in such areas as voting, criminal justice, education, employment, housing, and public accommodations. Our federal civil rights laws have transformed the nation, outlawing discrimination in nearly every facet of American life.

In recent years, the Civil Rights Division has vigorously enforced our federal civil rights laws, fighting discriminatory barriers and opening doors of opportunity for the most vulnerable among us. In the area of voting rights, despite the severe setback posed by the Supreme Court's 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, the Civil Rights Division has aggressively pursued investigations and litigation under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act and utilized other tools at its disposal, to protect voters from discrimination and preserve voting rights around the country, particularly in those jurisdictions with an ongoing record of discriminatory voting practices but that are no longer subject to Section 5 coverage.

The Civil Rights Division has also aggressively enforced federal laws to ensure constitutional policing. By opening 25 pattern-or-practice investigations over the past eight years under Section 14141 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, the Civil Rights Division has reduced excessive force, unlawful stops and searches, and discriminatory policing, which has strengthened the relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Where police misconduct rose to the level of criminal activity, the Civil Rights Division brought prosecutions. During the past eight years, the Civil Rights Division criminally charged nearly 600 law enforcement officials for depriving individuals of their constitutional rights while acting in their official capacity.

The Civil Rights Division has also zealously pursued hate crime investigations and prosecutions. The most recent FBI statistics indicate increasing hate crimes directed against

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International Union, UAW
William Yoshino
Japanese American Citizens League

Policy and Enforcement

Committee Chair

Michael Lieberman
Anti-Defamation League

President & CEO

Wade J. Henderson
Executive Vice President & COO
Karen McGill Lawson



African Americans, LGBT individuals, and Jews – and a 67 percent increase in hate crimes targeting American Muslims. Just last week, a South Asian man was murdered in Kansas by a man who reportedly used racial slurs and yelled “get out of my country” before opening fire. In recent months, there have been dozens of threats to Jewish Community Centers, schools, and other Jewish institutions across the country, and several Jewish cemeteries have been vandalized.

In addition, during the previous administration, the Civil Rights Division vigorously enforced our federal civil rights to protect the rights of people with disabilities, defend the civil rights of LGBT individuals, advance economic security and opportunity by ensuring equal access to credit, fulfill the promise of equal educational opportunity, prosecute human trafficking, combat housing and employment discrimination, prevent religious discrimination, promote access to justice, advance juvenile justice reform, protect the rights of Limited English Proficient individuals, prevent race and national origin discrimination by recipients of federal funds, defend the rights of service members, advance environmental justice, combat sex discrimination, and prevent and prosecute acts of violence against reproductive health care providers.

We believe the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights must have:

- a track record of aggressively and affirmatively enforcing federal civil rights laws;
- a willingness to defend against dilution or weakening of these laws and against unnecessary funding and staffing cuts;
- an understanding of the traditions and operations of the Civil Rights Division;
- experience affirmatively litigating cases in federal court across civil rights subject areas;
- the ability to manage effectively and lead a large organization; and
- a deep commitment to the important and historic mission of ensuring that our nation lives up to its promise of equality and justice for all.

At your Senate confirmation hearing last month, you testified: “The Department of Justice must never falter in its obligation to protect the civil rights of every American, particularly those who are most vulnerable. A special priority for me in this regard will be aggressive enforcement of our laws to ensure access to the ballot for every eligible American voter, without hindrance or discrimination, and to ensure the integrity of the electoral process... I deeply understand the history of civil rights and the horrendous impact that relentless and systemic discrimination and the denial of voting rights has had on our African-American brothers and sisters. I have witnessed it. I understand the demands for justice and fairness made by the LGBT community. I will ensure that the statutes protecting their rights and their safety are fully enforced.”

We appreciate your testimony in this regard, and we hope that you will appoint an Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights who will be guided by these values, as well as those set forth in this letter.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Wade Henderson, President and CEO, or Nancy Zirkin, Executive Vice President, at (202) 466-3311.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
9to5, National Association of Working Women



AARP
African American Ministers In Action
Alliance for Citizenship
Alliance for Justice
American Association for Access, Equity and Diversity
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Civil Liberties Union
American Federation of Teachers
American Jewish Committee (AJC)
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
Anti-Defamation League
The Arc of the United States
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote)
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO (APALA)
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Atlanta Women for Equality
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Bill of Rights Defense Committee/Defending Dissent Foundation
Bus Federation
Campaign Legal Center
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Reproductive Rights
Common Cause
Communications Workers of America
DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Demos
Disability Policy Consortium of Massachusetts
Earthjustice
Equal Pay Today!
Equal Rights Advocates
Equality California
Every Voice
Family Equality Council
Feminist Majority
Fitting The Description
Four Freedoms Forum
Gender Justice
Hindu American Foundation
Human Rights Campaign
Human Rights First
Institute for Science and Human Values
The Interfaith Center of New York
International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IAOHRA)



The Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights
Justice in Aging
Justice Policy Institute
Lambda Legal
Latino Council
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
League of United Latin American Citizens
League of Women Voters of the United States
Legal Aid at Work
Legal Voice
Matthew Shepard Foundation
Mi Familia Vota
Muslim Advocates
NAACP
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
NALEO Educational Fund
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Abortion Federation
National Action Network
National African American Drug Policy Coalition, Inc.
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE)
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of Social Workers
National Bar Association
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Law and Economic Justice
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
National Congress of American Indians
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA
National Disability Rights Network
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Employment Lawyers Association
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Health Law Program
National Immigration Law Center
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty
National LGBTQ Task Force
National Network for Arab American Communities
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Religious Campaign Against Torture



National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Newtown Action Alliance
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
People For the American Way
People's Action
PFLAG National
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
PolicyLink
Pride Fund to End Gun Violence
Prison Policy Initiative
Project Vote
Public Advocates Inc.
Rock the Vote
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
The Sikh Coalition
TASH
U.S. Women and Cuba Collaboration
Union for Reform Judaism
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
United Nations Association-USA East Bay Chapter
The Voter Participation Center
Voting Rights Forward
The Voting Rights Institute
Voto Latino
WomenNC/ NC Coalition for CEDAW
Women's Law Project
Women's Voices.Women Vote Action Fund
Woodhull Freedom Foundation
YWCA USA