



February 3, 2017

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the over 170,000 bipartisan members and supporters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I write to urge you to **oppose the nomination of Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL) to be Attorney General**. We do not take this position lightly. However, Sessions' record of opposition to policies that would help to end discrimination and protect the civil rights of women and girls, as well as his failure to adequately address key issues during his hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee and his written answers to questions for the record, demonstrates that he is not the right person to lead the U.S. Department of Justice.

AAUW believes a full vetting of each Cabinet nominee must include close examination of threshold questions concerning qualifications and temperament. Each nominee should also be free from all current and potential conflicts of interest. Personal or political allegiances do not in any way entitle individual nominees to less scrutiny. Indeed, such nominees may require additional scrutiny to ensure public confidence in a full and fair confirmation process.

Basic to all of AAUW's public policy efforts is the understanding that true equity requires a balance between the rights of the individual and the needs of the community. AAUW opposes all forms of discrimination and supports constitutional protections for the civil rights of all individuals. AAUW believes in the right to privacy and freedom from violence. We firmly believe in the separation of church and state. We support a fair, balanced, and independent judiciary. To guarantee equality, individual rights, and social justice for a diverse society, AAUW advocates vigorous enforcement of and full access to civil and constitutional rights, including voting rights, as well as choice in the determination of one's reproductive life.<sup>1</sup> Our values are based on more than 135 years of member-based advocacy for women and girls.

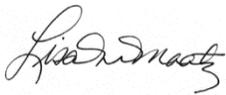
During his tenure as a senator, Sessions opposed critical civil rights legislation including: the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act,<sup>2</sup> the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act,<sup>3</sup> and the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013.<sup>4</sup> In the past, Sessions has spoken in opposition to expanding access to the ballot box and protecting voting rights for all. During his hearing, Sessions also reiterated his support for discriminatory voter ID laws, and his answers indicated that he had not done his homework on recent court cases on the topic.<sup>5</sup> As Attorney General, he would be responsible for enforcing the very laws he has vocally opposed throughout his career; AAUW strongly believes this is unacceptable for the nation's top law enforcement officer.

AAUW understands that Sessions' role as a senator with regards to these now-laws is different than his role as Attorney General, and at several points during his hearing and in answers to questions for the record, Sessions did in some cases agree to uphold current law. But he did not agree to that premise evenly, across statutes, refusing to commit to implementing all of VAWA as passed.<sup>6</sup> He also did not agree (in his written answers to questions for the record) that, as Attorney General, he would argue that it and other longstanding reproductive rights precedents shouldn't be overturned.<sup>7</sup>

When given the opportunity to explain how he would approach being Attorney General with respect to AAUW's policy priorities, regrettably Sessions' explanations fell flat. We were keenly interested in his confirmation hearings, and hoping for his candid responses, because AAUW believes in a full vetting before taking a position on any given nominees. Unfortunately, Sessions' testimony and answers to written and oral questions were not those of someone that is truly committed to advancing equity for all Americans. In fact, he hedged on many key priorities it would be incumbent on the U.S. Department of Justice to defend and advance.

I write to urge you to **oppose the nomination of Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL) to be Attorney General**. AAUW understands how critical it is for an Attorney General to defend laws and represent the people. Sessions' track record does not reassure us that he would be such a champion. Cosponsorship and votes associated with this nomination may be scored in the AAUW Action Fund *Congressional Voting Record* for the 115th Congress. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202/785-7720, or Anne Hedgepeth, Senior Government Relations Manager, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Lisa M. Maatz  
Vice President of Government Relations and Advocacy

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<sup>1</sup> AAUW. (2015). AAUW Public Policy Program. [www.aauw.org/resource/principles-and-priorities/](http://www.aauw.org/resource/principles-and-priorities/)

<sup>2</sup> Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009: Senate Roll Call Vote 14. (January 22, 2009).

[www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll\\_call\\_lists/roll\\_call\\_vote\\_cfm.cfm?congress=111&session=1&vote=00014](http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=111&session=1&vote=00014)

<sup>3</sup> Senator Jeff Sessions. (July 20, 2009). *Sessions expresses concern about the hate crimes act*. [www.sessions.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/floor-statements?ID=a8247be2-d851-bebf-9a8a-02a497fd6f1b](http://www.sessions.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/floor-statements?ID=a8247be2-d851-bebf-9a8a-02a497fd6f1b)

<sup>4</sup> Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013: Senate Roll Call Vote 19. (February 12, 2013).

[www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll\\_call\\_lists/roll\\_call\\_vote\\_cfm.cfm?congress=113&session=1&vote=00019](http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=113&session=1&vote=00019)

<sup>5</sup> Questions for the Record submitted by Senator Leahy. [www.judiciary.senate.gov/download/sessions-responses-to-leahy-questions-for-the-record-01-10-17](http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/download/sessions-responses-to-leahy-questions-for-the-record-01-10-17)

<sup>6</sup> Questions for the Record Submitted by Senator Leahy. [www.judiciary.senate.gov/download/sessions-responses-to-leahy-questions-for-the-record-01-10-17](http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/download/sessions-responses-to-leahy-questions-for-the-record-01-10-17)

<sup>7</sup> Questions for the Record Submitted by Senator Feinstein.

[www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Sessions%20Responses%20to%20Feinstein%20QFRs.pdf](http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Sessions%20Responses%20to%20Feinstein%20QFRs.pdf)