



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on February 9, 2017

Senate Confirms Jeff Sessions as Attorney General

Following 30 hours of often-contentious debate, the Senate confirmed the nomination of Senator Jeff Sessions (R-Ala) as our nation's attorney general on the evening of February 8, by a near-party-line vote of 52 to 47. Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia was the lone Democrat to join 51 Republicans in confirming Sessions. Sessions voted "present" and announced he would resign from his office as senator, effective 11:59 p.m. February 8.



"I can't express how appreciative I am for those of you who stood by me during this difficult time," Sessions told his Senate colleagues shortly after the vote. "By your vote tonight, I have been given a real challenge. I'll do my best to be worthy of it."

The debate in the Senate during Sessions' confirmations hearings was much less restrained than is customary for the body, which has a long tradition of maintaining an atmosphere of civility in which senators do not attack each other personally. That tradition was apparently broken when Senator Elizabeth Warren started reading from a letter written by Coretta Scott King (the widow of Martin Luther King, Jr.) in response to Sessions' 1986 nomination for a federal judgeship. In that letter, King had asserted that Sessions "had used the awesome power of his office to chill the free exercise of the vote by black citizens."

Despite Mrs. King's allegations, Sessions received an "NAACP Governmental Award of Excellence" from the Alabama chapter of the NAACP at their Civic and Human Rights Convention in Mobile, held from April 23-26, 2009. The plaque that the NAACP gave to Sessions read: "For The Outstanding Work You Do."

By her reading from the 31-year-old King letter on the floor of the Senate, the body's Republicans believed that Warren had violated a long-standing tradition in the upper house of not giving one of her fellow senators the respect that Senate colleagues should show to each other. Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Republican majority leader, accused Warren of impugning Sessions on the Senate floor, which is a violation of Senate rules. After a series of procedural votes, Warren was ordered to sit down and prevented from speaking again for the duration of Sessions' confirmation hearings.

In an interview about the Senate leadership's actions with Newsmax TV, former Representative Pete Hoekstra (R-Mich.) said:

The rules of the Senate I think are very similar to the rules of the House. If you impugn the motives of one of your colleagues in a derogatory way, then your words can be taken down.

In the House, when your words are taken down, you are prohibited from speaking on the floor for the rest of that legislative day and that's what they did with Elizabeth Warren last night when she went after Jeff Sessions in the way that she did.

It maintains decorum and a certain level of civility if you can describe that as what's going on in the Senate today. But that is the objective of it.



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However, Warren was not the first senator to criticize Sessions during the hearings. Earlier in the nomination process, Cory Booker (D-N.J.) became the first sitting senator to testify against another sitting senator during his confirmation hearing.

A Fox News opinion piece posted on January 10 defended Sessions by noting that while today's national NAACP and the congressional Black Caucus (which included Booker) "smeared Sessions' character without offering a shred of documented evidence that he's a racist," "there is plenty of evidence to support the claims that he's a defender of civil rights."

The Fox article provided as examples the fact that during his tenure as a U.S. attorney, Sessions desegregated schools.

Also, he prosecuted the head of the Alabama Ku Klux Klan for murder. The piece cited a *New York Post* report that Sessions' prosecution led to a multi-million dollar judgment that broke the back of the Klan.

The *New York Times* described the Sessions confirmation hearings as "ferocious even by the standards of moldering decorum that have defined the body's recent years," but all of that became a historical footnote when the final vote was taken.

President Trump welcomed Sessions to the White House on February 9 and introduced him as a man who has "devoted his life to the cause of justice and believes deeply that all peoples are equals in the eyes of the law and — very importantly for Jeff and for so many of us — also in the eyes of God. He's a man of integrity, a man of principle, and a man of total, utter resolve."

Following Trump's remarks, Vice President Mike Pence administered the oath of office to Sessions as he was sworn in as attorney general.

During his 20 years in the Senate, Sessions earned a reputation as one of that body's most vocal opponents of our nation's loose immigration policies and described former President Obama as a "dictator" because of his policies of resettling illegal immigrants in states that do not want them. He called attention to the potential for terrorists from places such as Syria infiltrating the United States hidden among refugees, and he also opposed legal immigration plans such as the H-1B guest-worker program on the grounds that they give American jobs to foreign workers.

Because of Sessions' record in favor of strictly enforcing our nation's immigration laws, Dan Stein, president of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), posted a statement expressing strong approval of the Alabamian's confirmation as U.S. attorney general on FAIR's website. It read, in part:

FAIR congratulates Jeff Sessions on his confirmation as Attorney General of the United States. Sessions is unparalleled in his knowledge of the proper role of the Department of Justice, the legislative process, and the rule of law, all of which will be critical in restoring much-needed accountability and responsibility to the nation's immigration policies....

Under Sessions's leadership, the Department of Justice will likely take action against jurisdictions that embrace dangerous policies that shockingly defy federal law. These policies have been directly responsible for periodic crimes committed against innocent citizens, whom our laws are meant to protect.

The new attorney general will also have the ability to help the nation's beleaguered immigration courts which are buckling under historic backlogs caused largely by the Obama administration's catch and release policies. Today, nearly 500,000 cases are waiting to be heard, and many of those



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released will never show up for their hearings.

During the past few years, we have posted several articles reporting on Sessions' longstanding battle against illegal immigration and H-1B guest-worker programs that replace American workers with foreign workers. Sessions was also a strong opponent of former President Obama's plans to promote trade deals detrimental to U.S. interests, such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

As Trump spoke about in [his remarks congratulating Sessions](#) on his appointment as attorney general, another important part of his new post will be forming a task force on reducing violent crime in America. Another item on the new attorney general's agenda will be to implement a plan to stop crime and crimes of violence against law-enforcement officers.

Sessions will also work with the new secretary of homeland security, John Kelly, to undertake actions to "break the back of the criminal cartels " operating in this country.

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