



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 128 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 60<sup>th</sup> 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

**Officers**

**Chair**

Judith L. Lichtman  
National Partnership for  
Women & Families

**Vice Chairs**

Jacqueline Pata  
National Congress of American Indians  
Thomas A. Saenz  
Mexican American Legal  
Defense and Educational Fund  
Hilary Shelton  
NAACP

**Secretary**

Jo Ann Jenkins

**AARP**

**Treasurer**

Lee A. Saunders  
American Federation of State,  
County & Municipal Employees

**Board of Directors**

Helena Berger  
American Association of  
People with Disabilities  
Cornell William Brooks  
NAACP  
Kristen Clarke  
Lawyers' Committee for  
Civil Rights Under Law  
Lily Eskelsen Garcia  
National Education Association  
Marcia D. Greenberger  
National Women's Law Center  
Chad Griffin  
Human Rights Campaign  
Wylecia Wiggs Harris  
League of Women Voters of the  
United States  
Mary Kay Henry  
Service Employees International Union  
Mark Hopkins  
AAUW  
Sherrilyn Ifill  
NAACP Legal Defense and  
Educational Fund, Inc.  
Michael B. Keegan  
People for the American Way  
Samer E. Khalaf  
American-Arab  
Anti-Discrimination Committee  
Marc Morial  
National Urban League  
Mee Moua  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice |  
AAJC  
Janet Murguía  
National Council of La Raza  
Debra Ness  
National Partnership for  
Women & Families  
Terry O'Neill  
National Organization for Women  
Rabbi Jonah Pesner  
Religious Action Center  
Of Reform Judaism  
Anthony Romero  
American Civil Liberties Union  
Shanna Smith  
National Fair Housing Alliance  
Richard L. Trumka  
AFL-CIO  
Randi Weingarten  
American Federation of Teachers  
Dennis Williams  
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  
Bazon 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  
DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Demos  
Disability Policy Consortium of Massachusetts  
Earthjustice  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Equality California  
Every Voice  
Family Equality Council  
Feminist Majority  
Fitting The Description  
Four Freedoms Forum  
Gender Justice  
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  
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