

Community Voice

Regressive Policies And Deplorable Ethics: Jeff Sessions Must Go

The attorney general has proven himself to be unqualified to direct the efforts of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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By Nicholas Chagnon  Katharine Beutner  / June 5, 2017

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To the outside observer, the Trump administration may largely seem like an ineffective mess. Scandals relating to the Russia inquiry, conflicts of interest, and the incompetence of the president and his advisors are piling up, and pressure is mounting.

However, one member of the administration is quietly implementing profound changes to the agency he leads. That person is Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

Sessions, the nation's top law enforcement official and lawyer, is doing plenty, and giving us plenty of reason for outrage.



U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

Sessions' nightmarish agenda for the Department of Justice is now clear. He is determined to reinvigorate the war on drugs and double down on mass incarceration, despite widespread recognition of the failures of both policies by justice officials, politicians and academics.

For decades, Sessions has vociferously supported drug war policies that even conservative pundit John Stossel has called "cruel and stupid." Most recently, Sessions ordered federal prosecutors to "charge and pursue the most serious offenses" in drug cases, directing them to seek mandatory minimum sentences and other punitive policies that have inflated the U.S. prison population to over two million.

He's even resurrected Nancy Reagan's drug war bromide-turned-punch line, "Just say no."

The attorney general is also actively cultivating paranoia about crime by citing a fallacious national crime wave and linking it to immigration.

During a recent local forum on immigration, Hawaii Attorney General Doug Chin publicly criticized Sessions for spreading falsehoods about crime, stating that Sessions attempted to mislead a meeting of state attorneys general.

Sessions has also implied that immigrants cause increases in crime, despite copious research demonstrating the opposite. He did not stop at blaming immigrants, either; Sessions has also blamed Black Lives Matter for this non-existent crime wave, arguing that the movement provoked an equally mythical “war on cops.”

Consequently, he ordered the federal government to back away from police oversight measures, such as the consent decrees that have effected real reform in many cities. Former Attorney General Eric Holder hit the nail on the head when he referred to Sessions’s approach as [“dumb on crime.”](#)

Sessions is also profoundly entangled in the ongoing scandal regarding the Trump campaign’s ties with Russia. You may recall that he recused himself from any Russia inquiry after revelations that, during his confirmation hearing, Sessions had misled the Senate concerning his meetings with Russian officials.

Yet Donald Trump’s [letter firing FBI Director James Comey](#) cited the advice of the former senator from Alabama as a reason for Comey’s termination. Given this clear attempt to stifle the FBI investigation, Sessions’ “recusal” seems to have been nothing more than political theater enacted to quiet earlier calls for him to resign. Moreover, news broke recently that Sessions’ meetings with Russian officials and subsequent statements to Congress may be [grounds for perjury charges](#), according to senators Al Franken and Patrick Leahy.

The account above merely sketches Sessions’s misdeeds. Beyond the above, he has aggressively defended the clearly racist Muslim bans; supported gutting the Voting Rights Act; maliciously prosecuted civil rights activists; and [refused to acknowledge](#) “pussy grabbing” as sexual assault.

Given his flat-earth crime views and questionable ethics, Sessions cannot continue to head the Department of Justice. We must demand better.

Call your members of Congress today with three demands. They must resist his efforts to reinvigorate the drug war by supporting the Justice Safety Valve Act, which was proposed with bipartisan support, and gives judges discretion to avoid issuing mandatory minimum sentences in some cases.

Beyond that, they need to push for an FBI investigation of Sessions' possible perjury, and ultimately call for his resignation.

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