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TESTIMONY

of

Chuck Canterbury

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Grand Lodge, Fraternal Order of Police

on the

**Nomination of Jefferson B. Sessions III to be the next
Attorney General of the United States**

before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary

11 January 2017

— BUILDING ON A PROUD TRADITION —

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Feinstein, and distinguished Members of the Committee on the Judiciary. My name is Chuck Canterbury, National President of the Fraternal Order of Police. I am the elected representative of more than 330,000 rank-and-file police officers—the largest law enforcement organization in the United States.

I am very pleased to have this opportunity today. I have testified before Congress and this committee many times—including cabinet nominations, agency head nominations and even a nominee for the Supreme Court of the United States. I can say without reservation that I have never testified with more optimism and enthusiasm than I do today as I give Jefferson B. Sessions III the whole-hearted and full-throated support of the Fraternal Order of Police to be the next Attorney General of the United States.

Following the news that President-elect Trump intended to tap Senator Sessions for this critical Cabinet post, the FOP immediately issued a statement to the press indicating our strong support for his nomination. He has been a true partner to law enforcement from his days as U.S. Attorney, as Attorney General for the great State of Alabama and throughout his tenure here in the United States Senate.

Senator Sessions has demonstrated commitment, not just on the so-called “law and order” issues, but also on officer safety issues that impact rank-and-file officers like our members. He was a leading cosponsor of the FOP’s efforts to enact the Law Enforcement Officers’ Safety Act, which was authored by our friend and former Chairman of this Committee, Pat Leahy. In 2010, Senator Sessions was the Republican lead cosponsor of S. 1132, the Law Enforcement Officers’ Safety Act Improvements Act, which made important and needed changes to the original law passed in 2004. Senator Sessions provided real leadership to make the legislation a successful, bipartisan effort.

More recently, Senator Sessions was deeply involved in the passage of S. 2840, the Protecting Our Lives by Initiating COPS Expansion (POLICE) Act. He helped build bipartisan support for the legislation, which passed the Senate and then the House before being signed into law by the President. The law gives the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) the authority to award grants to State, local and tribal law enforcement agencies to get Active Shooter Response Training for their officers. The need for this training has been identified by numerous law enforcement leaders and the FOP looks forward to working with Attorney General Sessions to launch and fund this program.

Senator Sessions also played a leadership role in our efforts to pass S. 2755, the Fallen Heroes Flag Act. The bill, which provides a flag flown over the U.S. Capitol to surviving family members of a public safety officer killed in the line of duty, was repeatedly passed by the House in prior Congresses only to die in the Senate. Senator Sessions was an important part of our effort to introduce a Senate version of the bill which ultimately was signed into law.

Now this may not sound like much but at a time when law enforcement officers are being hunted and targeted for violence, many of them are asking, “Who has my back? Who will protect me while I protect my community?” Bills like this which acknowledge and respect the sacrifices made by the rank-and-file officer truly resonate with my members and the public safety community.

Members of this Committee may remember the years that were spent trying to address the issue of the disparity between the sentences for the use, possession and sale of crack cocaine versus powdered cocaine. There was a considerable gulf between the position of the FOP and those advocating a complete rewrite of Federal law to vastly lower the penalties for crack.

In 2001, Senator Sessions introduced a bill to address this issue and he worked tirelessly to bring everyone together. He made sure the voice of law enforcement was heard and also asserted his belief that the disparity as existed in law at that time was unjust. In 2010, as Ranking Member of this Committee, he brokered the compromise that led to the passage—with the FOP's support—of the Fair Sentencing Act. We accepted the compromise because it was fair, it was just and it reflected the perspective of the law enforcement community. The importance of his direct role on this issue cannot be overstated. Without Jeff Sessions, I believe this issue might well remain unresolved today.

That said, I understand that a certain amount of partisanship is expected in nomination hearings like this, but I ask that all Members of this Committee recollect that Senator Sessions has worked in a bipartisan manner on many law enforcement and officer safety issues with you and with the FOP—more than I have time to list here. He has a 20 year record of bipartisanship and widespread support among our nation's law enforcement officers. When the cameras go off, I hope the Members of this Committee will keep this in mind as they consider this nomination.

On more than one occasion, Senator Sessions was among the few in standing up for law enforcement, especially when it came to the issue of asset forfeiture. Without his leadership and support, the equitable sharing program might well have been dismantled, leaving thousands of law enforcement agencies without the resources to cooperate with Federal task forces and other multijurisdictional efforts to combat trafficking in drugs, humans and weapons.

For us, this demonstrates that Jeff Sessions is a man who can reach across the aisle to get things done for the rank-and-file officer as well as a man who will support those same officers, even when it is unpopular to do so. The men and women serving in law enforcement will be proud to have Senator Sessions as our top cop.

Senator Sessions has served this country tirelessly and faithfully for the majority of his adult life. He is, above all else, a man who reveres the law and reveres justice. I believe that he will be an exemplary U.S. Attorney General with whom we will have a productive partnership and I urge this committee to favorably report his nomination. The FOP is very much looking forward to working with him at the Justice Department.

Thank you again of the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any of your questions.