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## Sessions' record a source of different depictions of senator

By Bill Barrow, Kim Chandler and Eric Tucker

CAMDEN, Ala. (AP) - Senators at next week's confirmation hearing will confront competing versions of Jeff Sessions, the Alabama senator who is President-elect Donald Trump's pick for attorney general.

His supporters will frame the 70-year-old Republican, who grew up in the segregated South before a career as a local GOP leader, prosecutor and elected official, as an unyielding but fair-minded conservative. Opponents looking at the same record will cast it as evidence Sessions should not wield power on sensitive matters including immigration, civil rights and national security.

Sessions, who would be a profound change from the Obama administration's Justice Department, will almost certainly draw support from Republicans controlling the Senate and its Judiciary Committee. But the proceedings nonetheless could be a rocky opening to Sessions' tenure and foreshadow how Democrats and like-minded advocacy groups will combat the incoming Trump administration.

"There are some gaping holes and some grave questions ... about his commitment to fair and even enforcement of the law," said Kristen Clarke of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

Similar concerns cost Sessions a federal judgeship in 1986, when he confronted and denied allegations that he'd made racist comments as a U.S. attorney under President Ronald Reagan. The Judiciary Committee denied him the post, and civil rights advocates have since raised objections to his positions on voting rights, hate crime prosecutions and immigration.

Yet in Wilcox County, Alabama, where Sessions was a leading student in the all-white public high school class of 1965, and in Mobile, Alabama, where he became a local Republican Party leader and federal prosecutor, Sessions' longtime friends speak fondly of a polite Eagle Scout and devoutly religious man they contend is unfairly caricatured.

"The man I know is an upright individual," said Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson, who met Sessions before either held elected office. "He is eminently qualified to uphold the laws and Constitution of the United States."

Greg Griffin, a black Alabama judge who worked as a state attorney when Sessions was Alabama attorney general, said

Sessions "always treated me with respect" and called him "one of the best bosses I ever had."

Sessions arrives at his second confirmation hearing Jan. 9 as one of Trump's most prominent early supporters and a fierce critic of Obama administration policies.

He opposed the Senate's 2013 immigration overhaul as too permissive and has advocated broad presidential powers to curtail illegal immigration, connecting lax border security to the terrorism threat. He has opposed efforts to close the Guantanamo Bay detention facility, has questioned whether terrorism suspects captured overseas deserve protections of the civilian justice system and as attorney general may endorse more aggressive scrutiny of Muslims.

His record on civil rights has stirred particular concern from advocacy groups.

He opposed expanding the federal hate crime definition to include violence based on sexual identity or gender orientation. He called the Voting Rights Act "intrusive" legislation long before the Supreme Court gutted a key provision of it in 2013 and has repeatedly sounded alarms about the frequency of voter fraud, which current Justice Department leaders consider virtually nonexistent.

Hank Sanders, a Democratic state senator in Alabama, points to cases Sessions pursued as a prosecutor against civil rights activists in the 1980s. "They called them voter fraud cases," said Sanders, who won acquittals for the defendants. "I called them voter persecution cases."

Yet Sessions voted to confirm Obama's first attorney general, Eric Holder, the first black man to lead the Justice Department. He also worked with Democratic colleagues on efforts to combat prison rape and to reduce federal sentencing disparities between crack cocaine and powder cocaine offenses, saying the gap unfairly targeted the "African-American community simply because that is where crack is most often used."

## 2 House Democrats boycott inauguration over Trump comments

By Matthew Daly

WASHINGTON (AP) - Two House Democrats are planning to boycott President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration to protest insulting comments Trump made during the campaign about women, minorities and other groups.

Reps. Katherine Clark of Massachusetts and Luis Guterierrez of Illinois said they are skipping the Jan. 20 ceremony at the Capitol as a matter of conscience.

"I could not look at my wife, my daughters or my grandson in the eye if I sat there and attended as if everything that candidate Donald Trump had said about women, Latinos, African-Americans, Muslims ... is OK or erased from my memory," Guterierrez said in a statement Jan. 5.

Clark said she respects the presidency and supports the peaceful transfer of power but that families in her district "are fearful that the anti-woman, anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and divisive promises that drove the Trump campaign will become the policies affecting the health and safety of every American."

Clark and Guterierrez both said they had hoped that Trump would use the transition period to unify the country but believe that has not happened.

"After discussions with hundreds of my constituents, I do not feel that I can contribute to the normalization of the president-elect's divisive rhetoric by participating in the inauguration," Clark said.

Guterierrez said he will attend the Women's March on Washington on Jan. 21 to protest Trump's election.

## African-American woman sworn in to Congress, makes history

WASHINGTON (AP) - Lisa Blunt Rochester is now the first African-American woman to represent Delaware in Congress.

Rochester was sworn in Jan. 2 on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives as the state's lone congresswoman. Rochester was elected to the seat being vacated by Delaware's Gov.-elect John Carney.

She hosted a reception Jan. 2 with fellow elected officials and supporters at the Library of Congress.

Media outlets report that Rochester told supporters that the significance of her election isn't lost on her. She reflected on a document that shows the "X" her great-great-grandfather, a former slave, signed to vote in Georgia during the Reconstruction Era, saying it represents "where we've come from."



In this March 29, 1967, file photo, heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali, center left, and Dr. Martin Luther King speak to reporters. Ali died in 2016 and was announced to the world in a statement released by his family Friday, June 3, 2016 He was 74. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. will be remembered Jan. 14 on his national holiday. See events on page 3. (AP Photo/File)

## Congressional Black Caucus to be more aggressive under Trump

By Jesse J. Holland

WASHINGTON (AP) - For almost eight years, the members of the Congressional Black Caucus existed in the shadow of the first black president. They praised President Barack Obama's achievement while at the same time pushing him to do more for their constituents who overwhelmingly supported his history-making campaign and administration.

But with Obama set to leave the White House on Jan. 20, black lawmakers in the House and Senate are recalculating and reassessing their place in Washington. And realizing they're regaining the limelight as the most visible and powerful African-American politicians in the nation's capital.

President-elect Donald Trump will face a larger and more aggressive caucus, which will advocate for positions with "a bit more force," said Rep. Danny Davis, D-Ill., a longtime member. "Without President Obama being in office, there will be more forceful articulation vis a vis administration policy."

To the outgoing caucus chairman, Rep. G.K. Butterfield, D-N.C., "The consequences are too enormous for us to be indecisive."

There are more black lawmakers in Congress than ever: 49 African-American men and women were sworn in Jan. 2, including Sen. Kamala Harris, D-Calif., just the second black female senator. Also serving on Capitol Hill are the first Indian-American senator, 38 Hispanic lawmakers, including Democrat Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada, the first Latina senator, and 15 Asian-Americans.

The caucus never had a perfect relationship with Obama, and several powerful members initially backed Hillary Clinton during Obama's first run for president in 2008.

Black lawmakers did help turn out the largest number of African-American voters in modern history for Obama's two presidential campaigns: African-Americans voted at a higher rate than non-Hispanic whites in 2012, 66.2 percent versus 64.1 percent. But those lawmakers felt disappointed when Obama did not focus as much as they would have liked on issues their minority constituents valued: criminal justice and policing, minority representation on the Supreme Court and other high offices, bringing jobs and industry to rural and inner city areas.

"We didn't make President Obama step to us all the time. We have to make leaders do their work they're not going to do it because they are essentially well intentioned. They have to be pushed," said Julianne Malveaux, economist and author of "Are We Better Off? Race, Obama and Public Policy."

Caucus members said they walked a delicate line, wanting to get behind the first black president but also promoting their own priorities, which didn't always seem to be on White House's front burner.

"There are times in which you'd like to go further than where the administration appears to be going but at the same time you also want to appear and be as supportive as you can possibly be," Davis said.

Republicans now control Congress and the White House, and black lawmakers, most of whom are Democrats, are left to figure out how to oppose and work with the new administration and the majority party on Capitol Hill.

"We find ourselves facing a very difficult political and legislative environment unlike any we have ever seen before," said Butterfield, as the caucus met at the Warner Theatre for a ceremonial swearing-in event this past Jan. 2.

Obama's departure will refocus attention on the caucus, said Fredrick Harris, a Columbia University political science professor and director of its Center on African-American Politics and Society. With Trump as president, "The CBC will be even more vocal than they were during the Obama era when their voice were muted by the Obama White House and their surrogates who pushed back on criticism that the president was not paying enough attention to racial issues," Harris said.

## Lawmaker removes Capitol Hill art with pig in police uniform

By Kevin Freking

WASHINGTON (AP) - A Republican lawmaker removed a high school student's painting from a Capitol Hill display Jan. 6 because it shows a pig in a police uniform aiming a gun at African-American protesters. The image was inspired by the shooting and protests in Ferguson, Missouri.

Rep. Duncan Hunter of California unscrewed the painting from a hallway display that includes hundreds of works of art and returned it to the office of Democratic Rep. William Lacy Clay, who sponsored the work and represents a St. Louis congressional district.

Joe Kasper, a spokesman for Hunter, said "there's nothing appropriate" about the painting. He said the artwork was the subject of discussion when GOP lawmakers gathered for a morning caucus meeting. When Hunter left the meeting, he walked to the display and took it off the wall.

"He made sure he returned it safe and sound, all in one piece," Kasper said.

Hunter did not speak with Clay about the portrait, and Kasper said it was Clay's prerogative to return the painting to the display. A spokesman for Clay says the congressman was unavailable for comment.

The painting showed a police officer taking aim at protesters with signs saying "history" and "stop kill." The police officer has an elongated face with tusks, much like a razorback pig. The background includes the Gateway Arch in St. Louis and a young black man looking out from prison bars. One of the figures also appears to show a protester as a wolf.

Clay's website gives the following description of the artwork: "The painting portrays a colorful landscape of symbolic characters representing social injustice, the tragic events in Ferguson, Missouri, and the lingering elements of inequality in modern American society."

In August 2014, a white police officer shot and killed Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager, in Ferguson, setting off weeks of protests.

Clay's office said Cardinal Ritter College Prep High School senior David Pulphus won the lawmaker's 16th Annual Congressional Art Competition, and "his visually stunning acrylic painting on canvas entitled, 'Untitled (hash)1' will be displayed at the U.S. Capitol Complex."

House Speaker Paul Ryan's office did not return a call seeking comment on whether he condoned Hunter's actions.

Drew Hammill, a spokesman for House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said Hunter "will soon realize that he's fallen down more than one rabbit hole."

The reference was to Hunter's recent admission that his campaign had paid the \$600 tab incurred for flying his children's pet rabbit with the family. Hunter said the charge to the campaign was a mistake and that he had reimbursed the campaign as part of more than \$60,000 in questionable charges he had discovered.

Kasper said the congressman has received an outpouring of support from law enforcement organizations and individual officers.

"I am ecstatic with congressman Hunter's actions," said Andy Maybo, president of the Fraternal Order of Police chapter in the District of Columbia. "As we all know, this painting should never have made it to the walls of Congress."

A tunnel leading to the Capitol is filled with paintings and other artwork done by students who enter them in the annual Congressional Art Competition. The nationwide competition began in 1982 and students around the country submit entries to their representative's office. Panels of district artists select the winner from each district, and the winning works are displayed for one year.