Asian Americans Advancing Justice Responds to White House Firing of Former Acting Attorney General Sally Yates

Atlanta, GA, January 31, 2017 — The White House fired Acting Attorney General Sally Yates yesterday, calling her actions a betrayal after she directed Justice Department attorneys not to defend the administration’s flawed executive order to ban refugees and immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries from entering the United States.

In response to the White House statement and actions, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, an affiliation of five civil rights organizations, issued the following statement:

We applaud former Acting U.S. Attorney General Sally Yates for standing by her sworn oath and duty within the U.S. Department of Justice. Ms. Yates did not ‘betray’ her country or the President. She acted in accordance with the rule of law and the U.S. Constitution she was sworn to uphold.

In her statement, Ms. Yates reminded all of us that an attorney general’s responsibility is to ‘...ensure that the position of the Department of Justice is not only legally defensible but is informed by our best view of what the law is after consideration of all the facts.’ Yates’ job was not to be a passive conformist to a poorly-crafted executive order but to act as attorney general nominee Jeff Sessions suggests he would act if confirmed.

Sessions, whose nomination has been opposed by Asian Americans Advancing Justice, stated for the record during his confirmation hearing, ‘The office of the attorney general of the United States is not a political position, and anyone who holds it must have total fidelity to the laws and the Constitution of the United States. He or she must be committed to following the law. He or she must be willing to tell the president no if he overreaches. He or she cannot be a mere rubber stamp to any idea the president has. He or she also must set the example for the employees in the department to do the right thing and ensure that they know the attorney general will back them up, no matter what politician might call, or what powerful special interest, influential contributor, or friend might try to intervene.’

It is dangerous to the rule of law, the U.S. Constitution, and our country for an attorney general to be painted with the brush of “betrayal” for doing his or her job.

Contacts:

Michelle Boykins, (202) 296-2300 x144, mboykins@advancingjustice-aajc.org.

Randy Bunnao, (213) 241-0227, rbunnao@advancingjustice-la.org.

Brandon Lee, (773) 271-0899 x200, blee@advancingjustice-chicago.org.

James Woo, (404) 585-8446, jwoo@advancingjustice-atlanta.org.

Tejal Mankad, (415) 848-7736, tejalm@advancingjustice-alc.org.
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta (formerly Asian American Legal Advocacy Center or AALAC) is the first non-profit law center dedicated to Asian immigrants and refugees (“Asian Americans”) in the Southeast.

Our goal is to engage, educate and empower under-represented Asian Americans to greater civic participation.

We are one of five independent organizations that make up the national Asian Americans Advancing Justice. Together with our affiliates in Chicago, DC, Los Angeles and San Francisco, we bring more than 100 years of collective experience in addressing the civil rights issues faced by Asian Americans and other vulnerable and underserved communities. Visit www.advancingjustice-atlanta.org.