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## URGENT ACTION ALERT



**PLEASE CALL NOW**

**DATE:** February 3, 2017  
**TO:** Concerned Parties  
**FROM:** Hilary O. Shelton, Director, NAACP Washington Bureau

## NAACP-OPPOSED NOMINEE FOR SECRETARY OF EDUCATION, BETSY DEVOS, RUSHED TO SENATE FLOOR FOR FINAL VOTE ON MONDAY MORNING, 2/6/17

*CONTACT BOTH OF YOUR SENATORS AND STRONGLY URGE A "NO" VOTE ON FINAL CONFIRMATION*

### **THE ISSUE:**

**In a rare move, before 7:00 a.m. on Friday, 2/3/17, the U.S. Senate held an early morning vote and decided to "invoke cloture" (in other words, set a time limit on debate and therefore avoid a potential filibuster) on the confirmation vote of Betsy DeVos to be Secretary Education. The final vote is now scheduled for Monday morning, 2/6/17.**

### **CONTACT BOTH YOUR SENATORS AND TELL THEM TO VOTE "NO"!**

Fair and equal access to a high quality public education for every child has been a cornerstone of what we have fought for; it has been instrumental in all we do. The NAACP has been in the forefront of the struggle for and a staunch advocate of free, high-quality, fully and equitably-funded public education for all of America's children. We are dedicated to eliminating the racial inequities that continue to plague the education system.

Currently, more than 50 million, or more than 90% of all children in the U.S., attend public schools. Today, the majority of these children are racial or ethnic minorities. During her confirmation hearing before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions ("HELP") Committee, Mrs. DeVos clearly demonstrated that she lacks the experience, qualifications or dedication to high quality public education to lead the U.S. Department of Education's more than 4,400 staff people nation-wide in furthering its mission to foster educational excellence and ensure equal access to high quality education for all students.

Mrs. DeVos has zero experience with public schools, either as a student, educator, administrator, or even as a parent. Mrs. DeVos' only qualifications are as a Chairperson for several organizations which promote schemes which she terms "school choice," such as private school vouchers and so-called "tuition tax credits" to fund private schools at taxpayers' expense. However, numerous non-partisan studies have demonstrated conclusively that school vouchers are not a good use of taxpayers' money and do not even significantly benefit the children who take part in such programs. Furthermore, the moniker of "school choice" is, in too many ways, a misnomer. Too often, options which include school vouchers and have been touted as "school choice" do not provide real, viable, options for students and parents; they imply take much-needed funds and resources from public school coffers. The "choice" actually lies with the schools, which may turn students away for a variety of reasons or may pick and choose which rules and minimum standards, if any, (including, but not limited to, basic civil rights laws) they want to adhere to. It is up to the school to determine whom to accept, Jimmie, Jamal, or José. In contrast, public schools are open to all and have accountability and transparency standards which have been put into place for a reason.

Given the importance of education to the NAACP, and Mrs. DeVos' sheer lack of qualifications and her demonstrated lack of commitment to ensuring the ability of all students to receive a high quality public education, the NAACP has officially opposed her confirmation.

## **THE ACTION WE NEED YOU TO TAKE:**

Contact both your Senators and **URGE THEM TO OPPOSE THE CONFIRMATION OF BETSY DeVOS TO BE US SECRETARY OF EDUCATION.** To contact your Senators, you may:

✓ **Make a Phone Call:**

Call your Senators in Washington by dialing the Capitol Switchboard and asking to be transferred to your Senators' offices. The switchboard phone number is **(202) 224-3121** (see message section, below).

**Write a Letter**

To write letters to your Senators, send them to:  
The Honorable (name of Senator)  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**A SAMPLE  
LETTER IS  
ATTACHED**

**Send a Fax**

If you would like to send a fax, call your Senators' offices (through the Capitol switchboard) and ask for their fax numbers (you can use either the attached sample letter or the message box, below).

✓ **Send an E-Mail**

To send an e-mail to your Senators, go to [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov); click on "*Find Your Senators*". Look up your Senators by state; go to their web sites for e-mail addresses.

## **REMEMBER TO CONTACT BOTH YOUR SENATORS!!!!**

### **THE MESSAGE**

- Over 90% of America's children attend public schools in our nation. The majority of public school students today are children of color and are low-income
- We owe it to them and to our future to ensure they get the highest quality education possible, regardless of their race, ethnicity, language, disability, gender, sexual orientation, where they live, or station in life.
- Mrs. DeVos' sheer lack of qualifications or experience with public schools and her demonstrated lack of commitment to ensuring the ability of all students to receive an adequate education are alarming.
- Mrs. DeVos has zero experience with public schools either as a student, an educator, and administrator, or even as a parent. In fact, she has never held a paying job.
- Mrs. DeVos' background is in promoting school vouchers and tax credits to support private schools. These options have been proven to be ineffective for students, families, communities and taxpayers.

## **THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS IMPORTANT MATTER!!!**

If you have any questions, call Hilary Shelton at the Washington Bureau at (202) 463-2940.

## **MEMBERSHIP IS POWER! JOIN THE NAACP TODAY.**

To become an NAACP member or to sign up for e-mail legislative and press updates, visit [www.naacp.org](http://www.naacp.org)

**No time  
for a  
letter!  
Call,  
e-mail,  
or fax  
NOW**

# Sample Letter

(date)

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

## RE: OPPOSE BETSY DeVOS' NOMINATION AS SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_;

As your constituent, I strongly urge you to oppose the confirmation of Betsy DeVos to be the next U.S. Secretary of Education. All parents and students in this country, a majority of whom are of color and are low-income, want the best education, support and dignity for their own children. Betsy DeVos has demonstrated that she seeks to undermine bedrock American principles of equal opportunity, nondiscrimination and public education itself.

The Secretary of Education's role as an enforcer of education and civil rights laws<sup>i</sup> is central to advancing our nation's vision of an inclusive and diverse system of high-quality public education that enables every student to live up to his or her potential. Mrs. DeVos has demonstrated no previous commitment to ensuring equal educational opportunity in schools. Moreover, in her hearing before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee on January 17, 2017, she failed to demonstrate that she is capable of and committed to enforcing the law.

Ms. DeVos' lack of experience is startling. She has never been an educator or worked directly with children and families in public schools. She has never led a school, district or state agency tasked with educating students. She has never even been a public school parent or a public school student. This lack of experience makes her uniquely unfamiliar with the challenges and opportunities facing the nation's students, families, educators and schools.

The U.S. Department of Education is responsible for implementing and enforcing laws protecting students from discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, sex, where they live or their station in life and those laws that provide for educational opportunity from early childhood through graduate school. The person responsible for leading that department must absolutely be committed to enforcing federal laws on behalf of every single student in this country – without regard to LGBT status, family income, race, ethnicity, home language, gender, religion, disability or immigration status. Our nation's Constitution, economy, future and children deserve no less.

Again, I urge you to oppose the nomination of Betsy DeVos to serve as Secretary of Education, and demand that President Trump nominate a qualified individual who has a demonstrated interest in providing a high quality education for all students. I look forward to hearing from you soon to learn what your position may be and what more I can do for our children, our nation, and our future.

Sincerely,

(sign and print your name and  
remember to include your address)

\_\_\_\_\_

***Remember to contact  
BOTH your Senators.***