

Accordingly, as I review the series of questionable acts that can be found in Mr. Ashcroft's record as a public servant, I find such action by Mr. Ashcroft to be inconsistent with the kind of vision and tolerance that the next top law enforcement officer will need to exhibit. Mr. Ashcroft's record on desegregation in the State of Missouri is one of those examples that makes me truly sad as an African-American and I have an obligation to emphasize this very grave matter.

John Ashcroft, as Attorney General and as Governor of the State of Missouri consistently opposed efforts to desegregate schools in Missouri, which for more than 150 years, had legally sanctioned separate and inferior education for blacks.

Missouri has a long and marked history of systematically discriminating against African-Americans in the provision of public education. During the years of slavery, the State forbid the education of blacks. After the Civil War, Missouri was the most northern state to have a constitutional mandate requiring separate schools for blacks and whites. This constitutional provision remained in place until 1976. For much of its history, Missouri provided vastly inferior services to black students.

After the Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Missouri Attorney General's office, rather than ordering the dismantling of segregation, simply issued an opinion stating that local districts "may permit" white and colored children to attend the same schools, and could decide for themselves whether they must integrate. Local school districts in St. Louis and Kansas City perpetuated segregation by manipulating attendance boundaries, drawing discriminatory busing plans and building new schools in places to keep races apart.

The now well-known St. Louis case, which was debated in these proceedings before the Senate Judiciary Committee, was filed in 1972. In brief, St. Louis had adhered to an explicit system of racial segregation throughout the 1960s. White students were assigned to schools in their neighborhood; black students attended black schools in the core of the city. Black students who resided outside the city were bused into the black schools in the city. The city had launched no effort to integrate; it simply adopted neighborhood school assignment plans that maintained racial segregation.

Senator Ashcroft, then the Attorney General, challenged the desegregation plan. He argued that there was no basis for holding the State liable and that the State had taken the "necessary and appropriate steps to remove the legal underpinnings of segregated schooling as well as affirmatively prohibiting such discrimination." The courts rejected his attempts; even the U.S. Supreme Court denied certiorari.

In 1983, the city school Board and the 22 suburban districts all agreed to a "unique and compressive" settlement, implementing a voluntary 5-year school desegregation plan for both the city and the county. Importantly, the plan was voluntary—it relied on voluntary transfers by students rather than so-called "forced busing." The district court approved this plan.

Attorney General Ashcroft, representing the State, was the only one that did not join the

settlement. He opposed all aspects of the settlement. In fact, he sought to have it overturned by the Eighth Circuit. The Eighth Circuit upheld most of the provisions of the plan, and emphasized that three times over the prior three years, specifically held that the State was the primary constitutional violator. Can this man be the next Attorney General of the United States of America.

We need a nominee that enforces the civil rights laws of the Nation, that brings strength and confidence to the top law enforcement post of our great country, and to affirm equal protection and fundamental fairness in the United States of America. We owe at least that much to the working people of America and all those who believe the United States remains an example of basic fairness and justice for all.

I strongly believe that some of the beliefs of Senator John Ashcroft are archaic and obsolete. This country has come so far in improving civil rights and fundamental fairness. The confirmation of John Ashcroft will set us years back after all the improvements that have been made. This would be a travesty.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE).

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time, and I commend her for calling this Special Order.

I too rise to express my opposition to the nomination of former Senator John Ashcroft, a man who has spoken repeatedly against gun control, against a woman's right to choose, against affirmative action, against integration of schools, against the Miranda rights of suspects. How can we have this person, as our President wants to nominate and has nominated, and who opposes a qualified person like Bill Lan Lee, who said that even though you are great and I hear what you say, I just do not believe you can do what you say; against Frederica Massiah-Jackson for Federal judgeship; against Dr. David Satcher, one of the tremendous physicians in this country for Surgeon General; against Dr. Foster, another candidate for Surgeon General; against Ronnie White, who, in 71 percent of the cases voted for the death penalty, where Mr. Ashcroft voted for another person who only voted for the death penalty 55 percent, who happened not to be African American.

Finally, when a person said that receiving a doctorate degree, honorary doctorate degree from Bob Jones University, that after he swore he was telling the truth, and when he looked into that camera, when he was asked about that university, Senator Ashcroft sat in that seat and said, in 1999, in June of 1999, that I did not know what Bob Jones University stood for, when George Bush went there to campaign and McCain went there to campaign, and the whole question of when President Bush apologized to the Catholics because he said that he should not have gone there because they are

antiCatholic, and never said a word about the antiblack. But that was our new President that wants to bring all people in. I just cannot understand how Senator Ashcroft could put his hand on the Bible, put his hand up to God and say, I did not know, less than a year ago, what Bob Jones University stood for.

Mr. Speaker, for those reasons, I do not think he is qualified to be the Attorney General of the United States of America.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Speaker for the additional 1 minute. In light of our discussion, very quickly, the relief for the minorities over the years have come through the courts. This year, we were let down by the United States Supreme Court in their decision that ultimately decided the election that allowed President Bush to become President. We were then let down by the executive, the President, by nominating John Ashcroft to be Attorney General. We need the legislature, even though we cannot urge them to vote in any way; the Senate, the only remaining branch of government who has not yet acted, to stand up for Americans, stand up for minorities, stand up for women, stand up for gays and lesbians, and stand up for all Americans, and not confirm the nomination of John Ashcroft.

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#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COOKSEY). The Chair urges all Members not to urge action of Members of the Senate.

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#### OPPOSING ATTORNEY GENERAL NOMINATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, as the ranking Democrat on the House Committee on the Judiciary and the senior Member of the Congressional Black Caucus, I am unalterably opposed to John Ashcroft's nomination to be Attorney General of the United States. I have reached this decision with some regret and consternation. In my 36 years in Congress, I have never publicly opposed a nominee for Attorney General. However, in the present case, my reservations about the Senator's ability and inclinations to support and uphold the law in such critical areas as civil rights, reproductive choice and gun safety are so grave; and his pattern of misleading and disingenuous responses at his confirmation hearings so serious, that I believe it is in the national interests that his nomination be either withdrawn or rejected by the Senate.

I am also concerned that the Senator's personal lack of responsiveness

to me foreshadows a pattern of conscious avoidance or, at best, benign neglect of me and my colleagues in the House.

First, in terms of civil rights, I am troubled by the fact that notwithstanding Senator Ashcroft's general statements about support for civil rights enforcement, he declined to state specific agreement with the Department's position in a host of civil rights cases, including its support of the University of Michigan's affirmative action program.

I am also dismayed that the Senator has taken public positions opposing voluntary school desegregation, and that he wrongly asserted that the State had done nothing wrong, and was quote, found guilty of no wrong, end quote, in the Missouri desegregation cases.

As we all know, there are two separate Federal Court of Appeals decisions and numerous district court decisions holding the State expressly responsible for the unconstitutional discrimination that occurred. I am also profoundly disappointed in the manner by which the Senator thwarted Judge Ronnie White's nomination to be Federal district court judge, the first African American justice ever to serve on the Missouri Supreme Court. Senator Ashcroft's unwillingness at his confirmation to acknowledge or to express a scintilla of regret for the disingenuous manner in which he distorted Judge White's record can hardly be seen as a promising omen to those of us in the African American community who have worked so hard to integrate the Federal judiciary.

Second, given Senator Ashcroft's past record and statements at the hearings, I do not find his acknowledgment of a woman's constitutional right to an abortion as settled law under Roe and Casey as being at all credible. I say this because in 42 out of 43 Senate votes concerning reproductive rights, he cast a vote aimed at overturning Roe versus Wade.

Third, with regard to Senator Ashcroft's record of opposition to gun control legislation, I remain unconvinced that he is the appropriate person to uphold and enforce our Nation's firearms law. To me, Senator Ashcroft's past wholehearted embrace of an extreme view of the second amendment is active support for legislation in Missouri that would allow individuals to carry concealed weapons and his unwillingness to commit to relinquish his membership in the National Rifle Association, disqualify him as the person best charged with enforcing our gun laws. In sum, I have come to the reluctant conclusion that the Senator is the wrong man for the wrong job at the wrong time.

When our Nation urgently needs an Attorney General who can bring us all together, we have been offered a person

known for extreme right-wing positions and divisiveness. I have spent my entire career fighting for the cause of civil rights, reproductive choice and common sense crime and gun safety laws. In my view, Senator Ashcroft's record is simply too inconsistent with these goals to justify our support for him.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to and commend the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES) for calling this Special Order and bringing us all together this evening.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I would just state to the gentleman that I thank him for his leadership on the Committee on the Judiciary and trust that our work together will not allow this confirmation to proceed.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the nomination of John Ashcroft of Missouri to the crucial position of United States Attorney General. Mr. Ashcroft has a long and consistent record of conservative extremism, opposing civil rights as well as qualified Federal nominees, abortion rights, gay rights and environmental protection.

In his confirmation hearings last week, we saw a nominee on his best behavior, and yet, he could not acknowledge the possibility that he was wrong about the impeccable qualifications of federal judge nominee Ronnie White. We have a nominee who denies that sexual preference was an issue when he questioned James Hormel's "life-style" before rejecting his nomination. We have a nominee who claims that as Attorney General of Missouri he always upheld the law and did not try and impose his own personal beliefs while the record shows that just the opposite is true. In fact, there is nothing in the record to indicate that Mr. Ashcroft has ever exhibited any flexibility in his ideology.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you should we support giving him the key to our nation's laws with our eyes opened and our fingers crossed.

I cannot remain silent when the person who is nominated to be the chief law enforcement officer of this country and who will be responsible for defending the civil rights of all Americans has repeatedly demonstrated his personal animosity for those fundamental rights. I urge the Administration to live up to its promises to unite this country and withdraw this ill-conceived nominee from consideration. At the very least, I urge my friends in the other Chamber to do the right thing and reject this nominee.

#### THE WAR AGAINST DRUGS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I will not take the entire hour, but I did want to rise and summarize a trip that I took last week to Colombia and Ecuador to inform our colleagues and our constituents about the progress being made in the war against drugs.

To be honest, Mr. Speaker, last year I was concerned when the President and the administration requested \$1.3 billion to be used in the war against drugs in Colombia and South America. I was concerned because I was not sure that it was the right approach for us to be taking; that perhaps it would send the wrong signals, and that perhaps this should not be an issue in which the American military is involved.

Mr. Speaker, I went to Ecuador and Colombia to see firsthand what is happening with those dollars, what is happening with our effort to interact with the leadership of Ecuador and Colombia to see what role we are playing and what role they are playing in solving this problem. I came back, Mr. Speaker, convinced that we made the right decision.

I come to the floor this afternoon to encourage our colleagues to get more information about what is happening in Latin America, to better understand the type of threat that exists there, to understand the importance of what we are doing in Latin America in the war against drugs, and to understand that there will be additional requests for dollars this year in the President's budget and the requests coming to this Congress to continue this fight for at least a 5-year period.

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Mr. Speaker, I started my trip in Ecuador in Quito, the capital, where I met with and had a briefing with our Ambassador, Ambassador Gwen Clare, and with her in-country team, including the military. I had a full briefing on the impact in Ecuador of the activities involved with Plan Colombia. I heard from the Ecuadoran leadership that while Ecuador did receive some support from this program, approximately \$20 million, there is simply a greater need, both in terms of supporting their military efforts and the economic efforts, particularly along the northern rim of Ecuador, in dealing with the overflow of the drug cartels in Colombia.

I also discussed with the Ecuadoran leaders, the issue of the Galapagos and the Environmental Damage being caused by the ship, that just a few days earlier, had crashed off of the coast of the Galapagos, and what we in America could do to assist Ecuador.

In fact, in coming away from that trip, I was convinced that Ecuador, being the key ally that it has been with America is, in fact, a country that we should renew our focus on. In meetings both before my trip and today, I met with the Ecuadoran ambassador to the United States, and I can tell you that she appreciates the effort that America has put forward and is willing to work with us on additional initiatives to cause further integration with the efforts of Ecuador in solving the drug problem and America in solving the drug problem.