



Senator Casey calls for progressive action at Hill rally

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At a rally held at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Chestnut Hill, Sen. Bob Casey [D, Pa.] told the audience of more than 250 people that Indivisible: Northwest Philly's advocacy work is an "important source of inspiration and motivation."

He recalled the words of President John F. Kennedy, "We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future." Adding "We are all in this together."

Indivisible is a national advocacy group with local branches across the country. The organization's goals are to "resist Trump's authoritarian agenda...focus on defensive congressional advocacy...and embrace progressive values."

Casey said he has never seen more people "engaged and determined."

"I have never seen this kind of intensity," he said. "And there is a reason for it. We have an administration and a Congress that is full of extremism, ideology, and efforts to divide the country, instead of bringing us together. But, because of your work, we could bring a level of scrutiny, review and accountability to the cabinet nomination process that has ever happened before."

Casey denounced Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos' plan to end the Obama's administration's adherence to the "Dear Colleague Letter," a memo that compels colleges and universities to investigate and resolve all complaints of sexual assault, even if there is a separate criminal case. The memo states the schools have a legal obligation to address sexual violence in school and on campus.

"One out of every five women is a victim of sexual assault at one point in their life," the father of four daughters said. "When someone is attacked and they are a victim. They have a right and we should have an expectation that the system will provide justice for that victim."

He also condemned DeVos and President Donald Trump's plan to privatize public schools. Trump's proposed 2018 education budget calls for the creation of a new federal private school voucher program. While the plan would allocate \$250 million to "private school choice," it also guts programs geared toward low-income students including afterschool programs and student assistance and loan programs, he said.

Casey added that in Pennsylvania all charter schools must be nonprofit, but in DeVos' home state of Michigan, about 80 percent of charter schools are run by for-profit companies.

DACA – Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

Casey said Trump's decision to eliminate Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or DACA is "not only immoral" but an insult to our values. He said eliminating DACA was "a betrayal of a sacred promise" made by the government to a segment of the population.

He added that a recent study by the Cato Institute estimated that "the cost to the federal government alone would be about \$60 billion over the next 10 years and the overall economic impact would be a little over 200 billion."

Casey urged the audience and the media to keep telling people's individual stories about who benefits from Medicaid, so it will be "excruciatingly difficult" for anyone to disregard. He urged people to continue to engage and mobilize and work together to continue to promote strategies and programs and investments to grow jobs and wages, sustain programs like Medicaid and Social Security and protect the most vulnerable of our society.

2017 Election

He said this November, Pennsylvanians have opportunities to elect democratic candidates to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, superior court and commonwealth court.

Democrat candidate Dwayne Woodruff, an ex-Pittsburgh Steeler and Allegheny County Judge, is running for the state Supreme Court, which has a 5-2 Democratic majority.

Philadelphia Judge Ellen Ceisler and Pittsburgh lawyer Irene McLaughlin Clark are running for Commonwealth Court, an appellate-level court that oversees government issues including Right to Know Law appeals.

Democratic candidates Debbie Kunselman, a judge on Beaver County Court; Maria McLaughlin, a judge on Philadelphia Common Pleas Court; Geoffrey Moulton of Montgomery County, who is serving on Superior Court after being appointed in 2016; and Carolyn H. Nichols, a judge on Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas, are running for Superior Court.

Casey encouraged attendees to take action.

"We happen to live in one of four states that are called the Commonwealth and I have always believed we have to be a commonwealth in life as well as in name," he said. "If we are going to be a commonwealth in life, we've got to have each other's back. We got stand up and fight for each other. That is not a democratic idea. That's who we are as Americans."