



Remarks by Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. to Department of Justice Employees

Tuesday, February 3, 2009

Good morning.

It's a privilege to speak to you today, both as the new Attorney General and as your returning colleague. I am deeply honored to have the opportunity once again to work side-by-side with all of you here at the United States Department of Justice.

The Justice Department has aptly been described as the "crown jewel" of the federal government. It has attained this distinction not because of any laws or regulations, cases or controversies, buildings or equipment, but rather because of the quality, integrity, and dedication of the people who work tirelessly to carry out the Department's vital mission. Simply stated, you – the employees of the United States Department of Justice – are the backbone, the heart, and the soul of this great agency.

The honor of serving in the Justice Department is very real – and so too is the responsibility that accompanies it. Citizens from across this nation look to us as the standard bearers of justice, fairness, and independence. At all times, and in all ways, we must demonstrate that we merit their confidence. We must fulfill our duties faithfully, and apply the law evenhandedly, without regard to politics, party or personal interest.

I owe much to you who serve in this Department today, and to those who served in years gone by:

When I was in the Public Integrity Section more than 30 years ago, it was you – or people just like you – who served as my mentors, my colleagues, and my friends.

When I was the United States Attorney in the District of Columbia, it was you – or people just like you – who stood shoulder-to-shoulder with me as we fought against violent crime, drug trafficking and corruption.

When I was Deputy Attorney General, it was you – or people just like you – who worked with me to protect our fellow citizens and the ideals upon which our country was founded.

And now that I am Attorney General, it is you – and precisely you – who will serve as the Department's faithful troops as we engage in a daily battle for justice.

We have much work before us.

We must strengthen the activities of the federal government as we protect the people – the American people – from terrorism. Nothing we will do will be more important. We must use every available tactic to defeat our adversaries – and we must do so within the letter and the spirit of the Constitution. There is not a tension between the ideals that formed this nation and that which we must do to keep it safe.

We must restore the credibility of this Department, which has been so badly shaken by allegations of improper political interference. Law enforcement decisions and personnel actions must and they will be untainted by partisanship.

We must reinvigorate the traditional missions of the Department. Without letting our guard down in the fight against global terrorism, we must embrace the Department's historic role in fighting crime, promoting civil rights, preserving the environment, ensuring fairness in the marketplace, and protecting the interests of all of our fellow citizens.

Our task will not be easy. Our days will be long and our challenges will be great. But I know that because of your professionalism, your integrity, and your hard work, we will succeed in our vital mission. And I pledge to you today that throughout the days and months ahead, I will work with you, I will listen to you, and I will learn from you as

we go forward.

And so, my friends and colleagues of the United States Department of Justice, I say to you today – let's roll up our sleeves, and let's get down to work.

It's good to be back.

Thank you.

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