



### **House Judiciary Chairman Conyers Questions U.S. Attorneys, Justice Department About Firings**

I hope today's hearings can begin to address several important questions.

First, what is the impact these unprecedented series of forced resignations have had on our criminal justice system? The 94 United States Attorneys' offices are the heart and soul of our federal law enforcement system, and in many respects, the crown jewel of the Justice Department. The lawyers who work in these offices are the very best and brightest of our lawyers. And it is absolutely critical that the U.S. Attorneys who supervise them – whether chosen by Democrats or Republicans – be of unquestionable integrity and independence.

When mass firings are engaged in for no good reason, I have to question what sort of impact this has on not only the offices involved, but every law enforcement official in the nation. How does this impact the continuity of ongoing investigations? How does it affect the enforcement of our immigration laws, our gun laws, and our drug laws, not to mention our public corruption laws? Can we really afford on-the-job training for the sake of political expediency, when the lives and safety of American citizens are so clearly at stake?

Second, what can we learn about the real reasons these prosecutors were fired? I am troubled when the justifications put forth for these firings change by the day, in reaction to the latest revelation. What started out as performance-related firings, quickly switched to failure to follow policy priorities. Yet as of today, nearly three months after the firings, we have yet to learn of any documented evidence identifying any specific concerns that were raised with any of these prosecutors before they were fired. That is no way to run an office, let alone a legal office responsible for life and death decisions.

Third, what do these mass firings and the way they were handled say about our present Administration? Good and honest prosecutors appear to have had their reputations unjustly besmirched and they may have been threatened for telling the truth. They have been told they were being fired for poor performance, when the exact opposite seems to be true. For all the world, this has created the impression that U.S. Attorney positions may have become nothing more than political rewards for loyal partisan foot soldiers. The inappropriate politicization of key law enforcement functions is an important story that this Committee will not ignore.

This Committee has been forced to take some rather extraordinary steps to bring these important witnesses before us today. Issuing subpoenas is not a step I take lightly. But the issues before us are simply too disturbing, the risk to our system of law enforcement too grave, to look the other way. I hope that today we can start to obtain some serious answers to these serious questions.