

Joint Statement of Former United States Attorneys
Before House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on
Commercial and Administrative Law
March 6, 2007

Good afternoon Madame Chair, and members of the subcommittee. My name is Carol Lam. Until recently, I was the United States Attorney for the Southern District of California. In the interest of conserving time, I will be making introductory remarks on behalf of all the former United States Attorneys before you on the panel today, with whom I had the great privilege of serving as a colleague, from the following districts: Bud Cummins, Eastern District of Arkansas; Paul Charlton, District of Arizona; Daniel Bogden, District of Nevada; David Iglesias, District of New Mexico; and John McKay, Western District of Washington. We thank the Committee and the Subcommittee for your courtesy in the manner in which we were subpoenaed to appear before you today, and will do our best to answer fully and completely any questions posed to us by Members.

Each of us is very appreciative of the President and our home state Senators and Representatives who entrusted us five years ago with appointments as United States Attorneys. The men and women in the United States Attorney's Offices in 94 federal judicial districts throughout the country have the great distinction of representing the United States in criminal and civil cases in federal court. They are public servants who carry voluminous case loads and work tirelessly to protect the country from threats both foreign and domestic. It was our privilege to lead them and to serve with our fellow United States Attorneys around the country.

As United States Attorneys, our job was to provide leadership in each of our districts, to coordinate federal law enforcement, and to support the work of Assistant United States Attorneys as they prosecuted a wide variety of criminals, including drug traffickers, violent offenders and white collar defendants. We did that with great success. As the first United States Attorneys appointed after the terrible events of September 11, 2001, we took seriously the commitment of the President and the Attorney General to lead our districts in the fight against terrorism. We not only prosecuted terrorism-related cases, but also led our law enforcement partners at the federal, state and local levels in preventing and disrupting potential terrorist attacks. We did that with great success.

Like many of our United States Attorney colleagues across this country, we focused our efforts on international and interstate crime, including the investigation and prosecution of drug traffickers, human traffickers, violent criminals and organized crime figures. We also prosecuted, among others, fraudulent corporations and their executives, criminal aliens, alien smugglers, tax cheats, computer hackers, and child pornographers.

Every United States Attorney knows that he or she is a political appointee, but also recognizes the importance of supporting and defending the Constitution in a fair and

impartial manner that is devoid of politics. Prosecutorial discretion is an important part of a United States Attorney's responsibilities. The prosecution of individual cases must be based on justice, fairness, and compassion – not political ideology or partisan politics. We believed that the public we served and protected deserved nothing less.

Toward that end, we also believed that within the many prosecutorial priorities established by the Department of Justice, we had the obligation to pursue those priorities by deploying our office resources in the manner that best and most efficiently addressed the needs of our districts. As Presidential appointees in particular geographic districts, it was our responsibility to inform the Department of Justice about the unique characteristics of our districts. All of us were longtime, if not lifelong, residents of the districts in which we served. Some of us had many years of experience as Assistant U.S. Attorneys, and each of us knew the histories of our courts, our agencies, and our offices. We viewed it as a part of our duties to engage in discussion about these priorities with our colleagues and superiors at the Justice Department. When we had new ideas or differing opinions, we assumed that such thoughts would always be welcomed by the Department and could be freely and openly debated within the halls of that great institution.

Recently, each of us was asked by Department of Justice officials to resign our posts. Each of us was fully aware that we served at the pleasure of the President, and that we could be removed for any or no reason. In most of our cases, we were given little or no information about the reason for the request for our resignations. This hearing is not a forum to engage in speculation, and we decline to speculate about the reasons. We have every confidence that the excellent career attorneys in our offices will continue to serve as aggressive, independent advocates of the best interests of the people of the United States. We continue to be grateful for having had the opportunity to serve and to have represented the United States during challenging and difficult times for our country.

While the members of this panel all agree with the views I have just expressed, we will be responding individually to the Committee's questions, and those answers will be based on our own individual situations and circumstances.

The members of the panel regret the circumstances that have brought us here to testify today. We hope those circumstances do not in any way call into question the good work of the United States Attorneys Offices we led and the independence of the career prosecutors who staff them. And while it is never easy to leave a position one cares deeply about, we leave with no regrets, because we served well and upheld the best traditions of the Department of Justice.

We welcome the questions of the Chair and Members of the Committee. Thank you.

Daniel Bogden, *Las Vegas, Nevada*

David Iglesias, *Albuquerque, New Mexico*

Paul Charlton, *Phoenix, Arizona*

Carol Lam, *San Diego, California*

Bud Cummins, *Little Rock, Arizona*

John McKay, *Seattle, Washington*