



The Office of Intergovernmental and Public Liaison's Department of Justice Newsletter

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Newsletter from the Office of Intergovernmental and Public Liaison

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Attorney General Mukasey Participates in National Crime Victims' Rights Week



Attorney General Mukasey, pictured here with award recipients, delivered remarks at the National Crime Victims' Rights Week Awards Ceremony on April 11, 2008 in Washington, D.C.

As part of its 28th annual observance of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 13-19, the Department of Justice honored the nine recipients of this year's National Crime Victims' Rights Week Awards. The awards program, which is organized by the Office for Victims of Crime, recognizes the work of individuals and organizations that have helped victims rebuild their lives.

"Crime Victims' Rights Week reminds all of us of the need to keep up our efforts to ensure protections, services, and rights for crime victims," said Attorney General Mukasey. "Today's award recipients have made important contributions to those efforts. I am honored to share the stage with such distinguished and brave individuals."

These nine honorees were nominated by their colleagues in the victim service and criminal justice fields to recognize either their courageous responses in the aftermath of a crime or their professional efforts to better serve the needs of victims with disabilities; to design and implement curriculum and tools for victim service providers; and to ensure that victims receive the services that they need. More details about the recipients are available at:

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ncvrw/2008/2008bios.htm.

Celebrating the Fortieth Anniversary of the Fair Housing Act

On April 17, 2008, Deputy Attorney General Mark Filip delivered remarks at an event in the Great Hall of the Department of Justice celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Also on stage are Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division Grace Chung Becker and Stephen J. Pollak, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division when the Act became law.

Excerpts from the Attorney General's Statement on the Anniversary:

"In April 2008, which the President has proclaimed National Fair Housing Month, we celebrate the Fair Housing Act's fortieth anniversary with a renewed commitment to achieving its goals."

"The right protected by the Act – to live wherever one wants and can afford – is at the heart of the American dream, and for 40 years we have striven to make that dream a reality for all Americans."

"Two years ago, the Department of Justice launched Operation Home Sweet Home to combat the more hidden forms of discrimination prevalent today. Through improved and increased discrimination testing and public awareness efforts, the initiative aims to expose and eliminate housing discrimination in America."

"On this, the fortieth anniversary of the Fair Housing Act, we at the Department of Justice pledge to continue our quest to eradicate housing discrimination in this country."

DOJ Monitors Elections in Pennsylvania and California

On April 22, 2008, the Justice Department monitored the presidential primary election in Philadelphia, Pa., to ensure compliance with federal voting rights laws. In April 2007, the Justice Department reached a settlement agreement with Philadelphia related to allegations that the city had violated the Voting Rights Act, the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), and the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA).

On April 8, 2008, the Justice Department monitored the municipal election in the City of Walnut, Calif., to ensure compliance with Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act. Section 203 requires that certain jurisdictions with a substantial language minority citizen voter population provide all voting materials and assistance in the minority language, as well as in English. Under Section 203, the City of Walnut is obligated to provide materials and assistance to Korean-speaking and Chinese-speaking voters at the polls. The Justice Department's lawsuit against the City of Walnut to ensure compliance was the first lawsuit ever filed by the Civil Rights Division on behalf of Korean-American voters.

Protecting Employment Rights of Military Reservists

The Department of Justice announced on April 17, 2008, that it has reached an agreement with American Airlines that, if approved by the U.S. District Court in Dallas, will resolve the Department's class action lawsuit against the nation's largest commercial air carrier, alleging it violated the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA). The Department's complaint, filed in 2006, alleges that American did not allow three named plaintiff pilots, and a class of similarly situated pilots, to accrue vacation and sick leave benefits while on military leave to the same extent as pilots on comparable forms of non-military leave.

"The sacrifices made by our Armed Forces, including military reservists, are invaluable to our nation. No member of the military should be disadvantaged for choosing to serve our country and for answering the call of duty," said Attorney General Mukasey. "The Department of Justice remains committed to protecting the employment rights of all Americans serving in the Armed Forces."

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

The Department of Justice is committed to ending all forms of sexual violence and has used the month of April, recognized as National Sexual Assault Awareness Month, to renew that commitment. Sexual assault is a serious crime and continues to impact thousands of women, men, and children every year. The 2008 national theme, "Prevent Sexual Violence . . . in Our Workplaces," focuses on ways to reach out to family, friends, and co-workers who may have been the victim of sexual assault.

Cindy Dyer, Director for the Office on Violence Against Women, announced on April 10, 2008, the newly designated Sexual Assault Services Program. This program will support the establishment, maintenance and expansion of rape crisis centers and other programs and projects to assist those victimized by sexual assault. This program was authorized as part of the Violence Against Women Act and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005.

"The new Sexual Assault Services Program will focus on providing improved services for sexual assault victims and a stronger criminal justice response to sexual assault crimes," said Ms. Dyer. "I look forward to working with sexual assault victim advocates, service providers and criminal justice professionals to implement this important program." Ms. Dyer is an experienced prosecutor and a recognized authority on the topic of family violence and sexual assault.

In addition to establishing rape crisis centers, awards made through the program will assist states, Indian tribes and territories to provide intervention and related assistance services.



Creation of the National Tax Defier Initiative



On April 8, 2008, Nathan J. Hochman, Assistant Attorney General of the Justice Department's Tax Division, announced the creation of the National Tax Defier Initiative or TAXDEF. The purpose of this initiative is to reaffirm and reinvigorate the Tax Division's commitment to investigate, pursue and, where appropriate, prosecute those who take concrete action to defy and deny the fundamental validity of the tax laws.

Millions of hard-working Americans take time out of their hectic schedules to perform a time-consuming and often arduous task of filing federal income tax returns. 130 million Americans engage in this ritual every year. These individuals participate because they know that with the privileges that the United States has given them come the responsibilities and obligations of citizenship. Former Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes' saying states it best: "Taxes are what we pay for a civilized society."

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Tax Division, and throughout its history its mission has been marked by the full and fair enforcement of the nation's tax laws. As long as there has been a Tax Division, there have been tax defiers willing to subvert our nation's tax system for their greedy self-interest. This TAXDEF Initiative should send an unequivocal message to honest taxpayers that to the extent that any of their neighbors engage in tax defier conduct, those neighbors will go to bed knowing that tomorrow may be the day when their crimes will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.



Protect America Act Update

The Senate has passed a bi-partisan version of the Protect America Act that includes retroactive immunity for telecom service providers who assisted the government immediately after September 11th. The bill passed by the House of Representatives does not include retroactive immunity, and it requires that intelligence agencies seek a court order before conducting surveillance on some targets located outside the United States. Neither the House nor the Senate has acted on the other chamber's bill, and no legislation on this topic has been presented to the President.

Deputy Attorney General Announces New Resources for Southwest Border

The Department of Justice will increase resources to support federal law enforcement activities on the Southwest Border through \$7 million for U.S. Attorneys' offices in that region, Deputy Attorney General Mark R. Filip announced on April 24, 2008, during a trip to the Southwest Border region.

The Southwest Border U.S. Attorneys' offices will receive funding for 64 Assistant U.S. Attorneys and 35 contract support staff positions to expand the prosecution of criminal activity along the border in the Southern District of California, the District of Arizona, the District of New Mexico, the Southern District of Texas, and the Western District of Texas.

"Border issues are a top priority for the Department of Justice," said Deputy Attorney General Filip. "This infusion of resources will provide for new prosecutors and staff as part of the Department's comprehensive, but flexible, strategy to fight crime along the border."

The allocations announced are the result of funds appropriated in the 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act. As part of the Justice Department's ongoing commitment to combating border crimes, the Department also requested an increase in border funding for the Department's FY 2009 budget. Specifically, Attorney General Mukasey announced in January \$100 million in new funding as part of the FY 2009 budget request for the Administration's Southwest Border Enforcement Initiative. If funded by Congress, the new resources will better enable the United States to combat the flow of illegal immigration, drugs and weapons across the Southwest Border.

New Law Enforcement Strategy to Combat Increasing Threat of International Organized Crime

On April 23, 2008, Attorney General Mukasey announced a new strategy in the fight against international organized crime that will address this growing threat to U.S. security and stability. The Law Enforcement Strategy to Combat International Organized Crime was developed following an October 2007 International Organized Crime Threat Assessment and addresses the demand for a strategic, targeted and concerted U.S. response to combat the identified threats. This strategy builds on the broad foundation the Administration has developed in recent years to enhance information sharing, and to secure U.S. borders and financial systems from a variety of transnational threats.

The announcement by the Attorney General was made during a forum hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, with Department of Justice Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division Alice S. Fisher, Federal Bureau of Investigation Deputy Director John S. Pistole and Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement Julie Myers also present.



Attorney General Mukasey delivers remarks at the Center for Strategic and International Studies on April 23, 2008.

DOJ Outlines Administration Views and Announces Web Site on Media Shield Legislation

The Bush Administration has outlined its concerns with proposed media shield legislation, and the Justice Department has launched a new Web page, <http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/media-shield.htm>, that will serve as the central location for information from the Justice Department and other federal agencies on these proposals. This page provides letters, testimony, public statements and views from officials throughout the government expressing their concerns with the proposed media shield legislation.