



# Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

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December 18, 2008

Chairman Patrick Leahy  
U.S. Senate  
433 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-4502

Ranking Member Arlen Specter  
U.S. Senate  
711 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-3802

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Specter:

On behalf of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), the nation's oldest, largest, and most diverse civil rights coalition, and the undersigned organizations, we write to express our strong support for the historic nomination of Eric Holder to the position of Attorney General of the United States. Mr. Holder is among the most qualified nominees for Attorney General in the last fifty years, and is uniquely suited to lead the Department at this moment in time.

Mr. Holder is precisely the nominee needed at this critical juncture to restore the integrity of the Department of Justice (DOJ). In the past eight years, scandal and controversy have rocked the Department, severely tarnishing its reputation. In almost every division of the DOJ, politics has trumped impartial enforcement of the law, and ideology has undermined competence. Further, the diminished efforts to prosecute and enforce civil rights cases have damaged Americans' constitutional rights and liberties and disrespected the rule of law. The Department has been disrupted by turmoil, instability, politics, massive turnover, loss of experienced staff, and a lack of confidence. The nation urgently needs an Attorney General dedicated to restoring the independence and integrity of the Department, with an unquestionable commitment to the Constitution and the rule of law. Eric Holder is the right person for this job.

Mr. Holder's qualifications and credentials are unparalleled. Collectively, his experiences in over 25 years of public service as a former Deputy Attorney General, U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, Associate Judge for the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, and a trial attorney in the Public Integrity section of the Department of Justice more than qualify him for the post. His tenure in each of these capacities demonstrates the autonomy, integrity, and effectiveness necessary to be a successful Attorney General.

Mr. Holder has demonstrated a willingness to exercise independent judgment on critical issues. As a trial attorney in the Public Integrity section of the Department of Justice, he fought corruption in both major political parties. Nominated by President Reagan for associate judge at the Superior Court for the District of Columbia, Mr. Holder served as a judge for five years and gained a reputation as a thoughtful, even-handed

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jurist. As the U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia for four years, Mr. Holder led one of the largest U.S. Attorney offices in the nation. Mr. Holder prosecuted Democratic Representative Dan Rostenkowski, then chair of the Ways and Means Committee. Despite the fact that Mr. Holder's indictment came at a time when the Clinton White House was working with Mr. Rostenkowski to enact important legislation, Mr. Holder pursued the case based on evidence, not politics.

His four years as Deputy Attorney General further illustrate Mr. Holder's independence, sound judgment, and character. Unanimously confirmed by the Senate in 1997, he supervised all of the Department's litigation, enforcement, and administrative components in both civil and criminal matters. During that time, Mr. Holder advised Attorney General Janet Reno to expand the scope of Kenneth Starr's investigation, a decision that ultimately led to President Clinton's impeachment. Mr. Holder made that decision — to allow an independent prosecutor to expand his investigation into a sitting Democratic president — despite heavy criticism by members of his own party. Mr. Holder also recommended that Attorney General Reno appoint a special prosecutor to investigate Clinton's Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and created a task force that developed the regulation, still in place today, regarding the appointment of special counsels in high-level federal investigations.

Mr. Holder's commitment to civil rights, and his ability to work with diverse communities, will also serve him well as Attorney General. Because civil and voting rights enforcement have been severely compromised within the Department of Justice for the last eight years, it is especially important that the next Attorney General have a thorough understanding of our civil rights laws and be committed to the vigorous and unbiased enforcement of those laws. As U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, Mr. Holder worked with a variety of organizations to renew emphasis on the enforcement of hate crimes so that criminal acts of intolerance would be severely punished. He created a Domestic Violence Unit, which was able to more effectively handle such cases. He also initiated and developed a comprehensive strategy to improve the manner by which child abuse cases were handled. In addition, Mr. Holder brought remarkable innovations to the office, including instituting a community prosecution program and localizing the U.S. Attorney's office by meeting with local citizens. We can expect the same sort of dedication, innovation, and creativity from Mr. Holder as Attorney General.

We believe that any close scrutiny of Mr. Holder's record in its entirety, including review of the depth and breadth of his experience, will leave no doubt that he should be confirmed as Attorney General. In evaluating any candidate for that position, LCCR conducts a close, in-depth analysis of the candidate's experience and commitment to human and civil rights. If the candidate is strong in those areas, we support the nominee. If the candidate's record is weak, we voice concerns or opposition. We support Holder's nomination because he has immense experience and demonstrated excellence as a lawyer, sound judgment, and a strong commitment to civil and human rights. Any effort to demonize Mr. Holder's nomination could not be based on his entire record, but would simply be motivated by politics or revenge.

In a country that has struggled to ensure equal rights and equal opportunity, Mr. Holder's nomination, as the first African-American Attorney General, validates those principles. It is a nomination in which all Americans can take pride. Mr. Holder's various experiences as a trial



attorney, judge, prosecutor, and lawyer in private practice make him uniquely qualified to run the Department of Justice. It would be difficult to find a candidate more experienced in the Department or better suited to lead it. His background will render him ready to lead the Department from day one. His even-mindedness and sound judgment will ensure that justice is dispensed fairly and equitably. His professional accomplishments and ability to put partisan politics aside make him above reproach. His commitment to the rule of law makes him the ideal candidate for the nation's top prosecutor.

Our country is facing several crises. It is critical that President-elect Obama's key appointments are filled swiftly so that the government is prepared to act as quickly as possible. It is a waste of precious limited resources and energy to haggle over such a qualified nominee. It is imperative that the nation have an experienced Attorney General who is respected for his abilities and integrity. Eric Holder is the right man at the right time.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact LCCR Executive Vice President Nancy Zirkin at (202) 263-2880 or LCCR Senior Counsel Lisa Bornstein at (202) 263-2856.

Sincerely,

Leadership Conference on Civil Rights  
Alliance for Justice  
American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations  
American for Democratic Action, Inc  
Asian American Justice Center  
Center for Inquiry  
Feminist Majority  
Human Rights Campaign  
The Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
National Abortion Federation  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People  
NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of La Raza  
National Fair Housing Alliance  
National Health Law Program  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Organization for Women  
National Urban League  
People For the American Way  
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