



Chairman Hal Rogers

House Committee on Appropriations

FY 2015 Budget Hearing: US. Department of Justice

Attorney General Eric Holder

April 4, 2014

Opening Statement As Prepared

Chairman Wolf, thank you for yielding. Thanks to you and Ranking Member Fattah for holding today's hearing on the Fiscal Year 2015 budget request for the U.S. Department of Justice. Attorney General Holder, thank you for being with us this morning.

The budget request for the Department of Justice totals \$27.7 billion, constituting a slight one percent increase over the Fiscal Year 2014 enacted levels. Understanding the difficult budgetary constraints under which DOJ is operating - particularly the rapidly escalating costs within our federal prison system - I look forward to hearing from you about the impacts of this flat funding level to the operational capabilities of our men and women on the front lines. Where these dedicated federal law enforcement and intelligence officers are concerned, as Members of this Committee, we have a special responsibility to ensure we are prioritizing the mission and tying funding to results.

Candidly, I am concerned by a number of proposals and misplaced priorities which undermine the integrity of this request.

First, and probably most importantly, your budget proposes to absorb some \$937 million in mandatory pay and retirement increases, foreign operations expenses, and GSA rent with unspecific, amorphous "administrative reductions." I believe our colleagues on the Senate side referred to this tactic "smoke and mirrors," but I call it a budget gimmick. The reality is that you've sent your budget over with a billion dollar sized hole that the Committee will have to fill. This isn't a responsible approach to budgeting, particularly given the DOJ's critical responsibility to support its personnel with the tools, training and equipment necessary to carry out the security, intelligence and anti-drug missions that keep the citizens of this country safe.

Second, I regret that you will not find much support within this Committee for the dozen new grant programs proposed in the budget or for any of the programs patently rejected by Congress in this year's omnibus. We absolutely need to support our state and local partners, but I fear your request isn't placing a sufficient priority on the law enforcement or national security missions that are the keystones of your agency.

Beyond my specific concerns about the budget proposal, I would be remiss if I did not register my concern that this Administration has completely abdicated one of its chief responsibilities

under the Controlled Substances Act. As the chief law enforcement officer of this country, Mr. Attorney General, it's incredibly disheartening to learn that you are not, in fact, enforcing the law. I suspect the Committee will discuss at length your decision to allow distributors in Washington and Colorado to dispense marijuana and your instruction to U.S. Attorneys to deemphasize marijuana prosecutions. I am sure you understand that, more than contributing to a terrible public health and law enforcement crisis, you are undermining the rule of law in this country when you pick and choose which laws to enforce. I hope and pray that this does not leave a dark cloud on your legacy in this role, particularly given our many, constructive conversations about drug abuse in this country.

In fact, this runs completely counter to the Department's incredibly positive strides in recent years to beat back on the scourge of prescription drug abuse that is crippling so many communities in our country. I appreciate that you've lent your voice to this cause, engaging the law enforcement and public health communities, particularly as we've seen a transition from opioid painkillers to heroin in urban and rural areas alike. This is an alarming trend, and I look forward to hearing from you about how DOJ is using the tools at its disposal to root out bad actors – whether they're street level dealers or the variety that wears a white coat and a stethoscope.

Thank you for your time today, and I look forward to your testimony. I yield back.

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