

THE HONORABLE HAROLD ROGERS
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE, AND RELATED AGENCIES
BUDGET HEARING – FISCAL YEAR 2025 REQUEST FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
JUSTICE
APRIL 16, 2024

Good morning.

The subcommittee will come to order. Without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare a recess at any time.

Today, we welcome the Attorney General of the United States, the Honorable Merrick Garland, to the Subcommittee to testify on the Department of Justice's Fiscal Year 2025 budget request.

The Department requests approximately \$38 billion in discretionary resources, an increase of nearly 2 percent over the fiscal year 2024 enacted level.

Once again, the Department's budget submission uses themes such as "upholding the rule of law," and "keeping our country safe." It is the job of Congress to examine whether agency priorities line up with these themes and fund the Department appropriately and accordingly.

Unfortunately, the Department's budget underwhelms and has not thoughtfully identified areas where strategic reductions could be made, aside from aid to local law enforcement.

I am not advocating for arbitrary, large-scale reductions that would make the Department ineffective and our country less safe.

However, I do believe that robust law enforcement and strategic reductions are not conflicting goals. It just requires hard work and thoughtful prioritization.

So, let's examine the Department's FY25 priorities.

The Department prioritizes "Combating Drug Trafficking and Preventing Overdose Deaths," and you note that the fentanyl epidemic "accounts for some two-thirds of the more than 110,000 drug overdose deaths each year."

While the submission rightly highlights "defeating drug cartels and combatting the drug poisoning epidemic in communities," the budget puts a department-wide emphasis on equipping federal agents with Body Cameras.

Drug cartels and their crime syndicates in the United States must be decimated, period.

The death and devastation the cartels and gangs have inflicted on American families, and bringing them to justice, ought to be the Department's top priority.

Whether the agents doing the decimating have a camera attached to them is secondary.

Despite this administration's best efforts to push the issue to the back burner, the Biden border crisis continues and shows no signs of stopping. People and drugs continue to flow across our southern border, in blatant contravention of our laws.

In an ever-evolving situation, last year 50 times more Chinese citizens were apprehended crossing illegally from Mexico, compared to two years ago.

When landowners attempt to protect their life and property, they end up being arrested.

When will the madness stop? Perhaps when this administration takes the cuffs off law enforcement and allows them to do their job.

Next, the Department prioritizes "Combating Violent Crime and Gun Violence."

In their 2023 Violent Crime Survey, the Major City Chiefs Association noted a decrease in homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault in American cities. However, these decreases were slight, and the numbers remain unacceptably high.

Nevertheless, I am hopeful that this change in direction signifies a lasting "about-face" by those who embraced the 'Defund the Police' movement and vindication for those of us who decried it from the beginning.

With the trends, for now, seeming to go in the right direction, it confounds me that the Department seeks to cut law enforcement assistance, including reductions to state and local law enforcement Assistance Grants and the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program.

Another priority listed by the Department is "Protecting National Security by Countering Terrorism, Cyber Threats, and Nation-State Threats."

To that end, I will commend the National Security Division for acknowledging in their budget submission the October 7 terrorist attack on Israel by the terror group Hamas, noting that the attack has led to an increase in "terrorism-related conduct," both domestically and overseas.

Such a warning has taken on greater importance in recent weeks as chants of "death to America" are no longer confined to Middle Eastern capitals but are now being heard on American streets.

If such chants are not "terrorism-related conduct," it's pretty close.

I would like to hear if the Attorney General agrees and what action the Department might take regarding these developments, aside from issuing statements of condemnation.

The Department of Justice over the last four years has picked sides when prosecuting and ultimately failed to uphold the rule of law equally and fairly when it comes to American citizens, and even American businesses.

It is not surprising that two phrases notably absent from the budget request are “equal justice under law” and “respect for separation of powers.”

In closing, Mr. Attorney General, where we can find agreement, you will find support. But when priorities diverge and agency actions are at odds with what we consider good government and common sense, we will respond accordingly.

We recognize that you have an incredibly demanding job, and I appreciate you being here today.

I look forward to working with the Ranking Member and all members of the Subcommittee to appropriately fund the important missions of the Department of Justice as this year’s appropriations process moves forward.

At this time, I would like to recognize Mr. Cartwright for any remarks he may wish to make.