

CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE OF TEXAS

STATEMENT

HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

HEARING ON “OVERSIGHT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE”

10:00 AM, 2141 RAYBURN HOB



JUNE 4, 2024

- Thank you, Chairman Jordan and Ranking Member Nadler, for the opportunity to speak today and thank you to our witness, Attorney General Merrick Garland, for appearing here today.
- As a senior member of this committee and the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Crime and Federal Government Surveillance, I can speak from my many years of experience in Congress and as a member of this committee in its role to oversee and legislate on matters related to the administration of justice, that it is of our highest duty to continue to work to ensure that the values of justice are realized for all Americans.

- And I take our duties and responsibilities in conducting oversight of the U.S. Department of Justice with all due seriousness.
- Today, however, rather than focus on the main responsibilities of this committee and that of the U.S. Department of Justice, and how best to make progress on major issues of crime, immigration, and civil rights, this committee is wasting constituents' time and money by delivering unsubstantiated attacks against Attorney General Merrick Garland and the Department of Justice.
- Indeed, there is a distinct lack of legitimate cause for today's hearings.
- The work of Attorney General Merrick Garland and the Department of Justice under the Biden Administration has surely been in furtherance of that same goal – upholding the rule of law, keeping our country safe, and protecting the civil rights of all Americans.
- As the nation's chief law enforcement officer, Attorney General Garland leads the Justice Department's employees, who work across the United States and in more than 50 countries worldwide.
- Attorney General Garland has remained committed to these principles throughout his long career.
- He served as the Chief Judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit from 2013-2020 and served as Chair of the Executive Committee of the Judicial Conference of the United States from 2017-2020.

- Prior to his time on the federal bench, Attorney General Garland was a dedicated public servant at the Department of Justice, with responsibilities spanning criminal, civil, and national security matters.
- From my perspective, informed by my decades of work on this committee, Attorney General Garland's Justice Department has gone above and beyond in service of the American people.
- The Justice Department has worked closely to monitor the conflict in the Middle East, countering potential sources of terrorist activity and ensuring the safety of Americans at home and abroad.
- Under Attorney General Garland, the Justice Department has launched an anti-violent crime strategy that has already produced an 18% decline in murder rates in the first quarter of 2024.
- The Justice Department has leveraged the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which was ushered through the Crime Subcommittee when I served as its Chair, and helped to bring to the President's desk this critical legislation that will help keep more than 700 firearms out of the hands of prohibited buyers.
- Over the past three years, the Justice Department has zeroed in on the two largest and most violent drug trafficking operations, extraditing multiple major associates to face drug trafficking and other criminal charges in the US.
- Attorney General Garland has also led the department to protect Americans from economic harm, through targeting corporate crime, protecting taxpayer funds from fraud, and preventing the theft of intellectual property.

- The Justice Department has worked tirelessly to protect the right to vote and combat hate crimes across this nation, improving hate crime reporting and prosecution.
- Above all, the Department has continued to uphold the rule of law, protect those who serve the public, and ensure our democratic institutions are protected.
- Despite this clear commitment to progress and justice, my Republican colleagues unfortunately have sought to repeatedly disparage the hard work of Attorney General Garland and even have pushed to defund crucial law enforcement initiatives and entire arms of law enforcement within the Department of Justice.
- We cannot continue down this partisan and entirely unproductive path of attacks.
- In rejecting these purely political attacks, I stand firmly in support of Attorney General Garland and the Department of Justice.
- Allegations made at this hearing of weaponization and misconduct are alarmist and false.
- In every investigation, whether it centered on former President Trump or President Biden or January 6th Rioters, the Justice Department has acted in accordance with the letter of the law, not partisan motivations.
- They have worked hard to ensure that the principles of justice are upheld and that no one is above the laws of our nation and this Congress.
- The integrity of these investigations and Attorney General Garland's Department of Justice must be recognized.

- No matter the fearmongering narrative in this hearing today, the fact of the matter is, that the Department of Justice has continued to work to protect the civil rights of Americans, combat discrimination, drive down violent crime and ensure the principles of justice for all.
- I trust that they will continue to do their work with integrity and character.
- Attorney General Garland, thank you for your hard work, your time today, and your service to the American people.
- Thank you, I yield back the remainder of my time.