

SEAN D. REYES – Utah’s 21st Attorney General

On December 30, 2013, at the age of 42, Sean Reyes was appointed by Governor Gary R. Herbert and took the oath of office. General Reyes was immediately faced with the challenge of restoring public trust in the Utah Attorney General’s Office (“AGO”), where accusations of wrongdoing and abuse of power beset his two predecessors.

RESTORING PUBLIC TRUST

In a short amount of time, Reyes has won back confidence in the AGO from leaders in law, education, business, politics and, most importantly, from Utah citizens. In the first months of his administration, by commissioning outside investigations and audits to shine a light on even the possibility of misconduct in the AGO, streamline budgets and expenditures, and improve infrastructure and client satisfaction, Reyes quickly reestablished credibility at the highest ranks of the office. By requiring resignations of all leadership, asking them to reapply and comprehensively evaluating talent before making selections on over sixty leadership positions, he demonstrated his commitment to hire and promote based solely on merit, diffusing perceptions of cronyism or political favoritism. He is quick to point out that the significant increase in women and minority leaders in the AGO is not a result of an affirmative action program but simply a more representative outcome from many more candidates applying with a level playing field. Armed with a top-flight executive team that he largely recruited from the private sector, and committed leadership within the office, General Reyes has created renewed excitement among the lawyers and professionals of the AGO to match the increased trust of the public in his office.

WIDE SPREAD SUPPORT

Reyes has been lauded by legislators from both sides of the aisle for his work ethic and legal acumen and won praise from the Governor and his Cabinet for increased excellence and transparency in the AGO. The office, under the Reyes Administration, has the support of mayors, councilmen and commissioners statewide and critical law enforcement relationships have been repaired with sheriffs, police chiefs and federal partners like ICE and the DEA. Among his peers in the legal community, Reyes has been applauded by county attorneys, judges and lawyers for focusing his office on the Rule of Law and not political agendas or special interests. Citizens have also appreciated Reyes’ emphasis on protecting them and particularly children from violent crimes, drugs and internet predators. Consumers and business owners have praised his focus on stamping out white collar crime, illegal business practices, Ponzi schemes and fraud that costs the state billions of dollars annually. And whether or not they agree with a particular position he is asserting or defending, citizens statewide are gaining respect for Reyes’ leadership and focus on common sense approaches, legal excellence and ethics.

CASES OF NATIONAL INTEREST

At the time of his inauguration, several cases of national interest, including those regarding the definition of marriage, polygamy and immigration were awaiting his direction and leadership. While very emotional and potentially divisive in nature, Reyes has approached each case with the same sense of dignity, professionalism, duty and respect that won him numerous awards and

recognitions throughout his legal career. Along with many upgrades to infrastructure, technology and efficiencies to make his legal teams even better, he has also organized a Constitutional Law Section to prepare the AGO for many critical issues facing and likely to face Utah in the near future.

REPUTATION

Reyes and his Executive Team have quickly established a reputation on Capitol Hill for their cohesion and tireless work ethic. Work weeks of 70-80 hours (and 90-100 hours during the legislative session) are not uncommon. Client responsiveness, legal excellence, fiscal responsibility, non-partisan/no-nonsense approaches, blue collar, roll-up-your sleeves, get the job done, win doing it the right way strategies are all key phrases from the leadership at the AGO. While expecting a tremendous amount from his team (from leaders to line staff), no one expects more from himself than Reyes in making the AGO the finest law office in the state. Discipline and integrity are also words often used to describe the Reyes Team. While not required by state law, under the direction of Reyes, there has been a clear line of demarcation drawn between his external political (campaign) team and his internal office (policy) team. While admittedly inconvenient, keeping separate phones, computers, staff and resources helps the public confidence that state resources are not being used for personal or campaign purposes.

EDUCATION & PRIOR LEGAL AND LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Before serving as Utah AG, Reyes was among the most dynamic and successful young professionals in the country. He has been recognized nationally and locally for his legal skills and professionalism, local and national Bar leadership and unparalleled commitment to public service. He has lent his legal expertise to media outlets ranging from Fox National Business News to The Economist.

After graduating summa cum laude from Brigham Young University in 1994, Reyes earned his law degree with honors from U.C. Berkeley in 1997. He practiced for nearly fourteen years at Parsons Behle & Latimer, the largest law firm in the State, where he became one of the first minority lawyers to make partner at a major Utah firm. While there, Reyes represented clients on some of the largest and most high profile litigation cases in the history of the State. He argued or briefed cases before state and federal courts throughout the country, including the Utah Supreme Court and Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals.

During that time, Reyes was honored as the first-ever National Outstanding Young Lawyer by the American Bar Association, a distinction bestowed on one lawyer out of millions nationwide. He was also recognized as the Utah Young Lawyer of the Year, one of Utah's forty most influential business leaders under the age of forty and the first recipient of Brigham Young University's Distinguished Young Alumnus Award. A nine time consecutive honoree on Utah Business Magazine's Legal Elite List, Reyes has also been highlighted as a Mountain States Super Lawyer and Top 50 Most Influential Asian Professional in America.

After his distinguished career at Parsons Behle, Reyes continued to be recognized with awards and accolades for his legal skill and excellence in his role as General Counsel for a Utah media and technology company.

In the legal community, Reyes has served for over a decade as a small claims judge and spent two years serving on the governing body of the Utah State Bar. He was President of the Utah Minority Bar Association for which he received state and national honors and served in leadership for the Young Lawyers Division.

For years, Reyes has maintained an “AV” rating, the highest ranking possible as determined by peer ratings.

Reyes has lectured at both local law schools, presented at numerous legal conferences and mentored countless students. His legal volunteer endeavors have included pro bono cases for refugees, veterans and Seniors, community education projects, free legal clinics, fundraising for pro bono legal services, clothing drives and service on various task forces and commissions.

PAST BUSINESS AND NON-PROFIT EXPERIENCE

In the business community, Reyes has served on boards for “for-profit” and “non-profit” entities, including organizations ranging from Utah Fast Pass (for fallen law enforcement officers) to United Way Heroes and Fight the New Drug (an anti-pornography initiative). He helped rebuild the Utah Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and co-founded its education foundation. He was an early supporter of the Utah Asian Chamber and helped establish its education initiative. Reyes has created programs to bring larger businesses together to mentor smaller ones. He was also a co-founder of Fraud College, a free-to-the-public symposium to educate everyday citizens on how to avoid being taken by scams with an on-line component for support. Fraud College has received national acclaim and been lauded as a model for combating fraud nationwide. In his various leadership capacities, Reyes has a diversity of leadership experience in the boardroom such as advising the White House to negotiating contracts with foreign heads of state.

Reyes’ deep appreciation and love of Utah has led him to devote thousands of hours to community and non-profit organizations and underserved individuals. As an example, he supervised thousands of volunteers over a three year period who taught English classes to tens of thousands of immigrants from all over the world. Reyes speaks frequently at schools from the elementary level to higher education and even juvenile detention facilities to promote education, self-responsibility and self-reliance.

POLITICAL SERVICE AT ALL LEVELS

In addition to his legal career and volunteer service, Reyes has been very involved in Utah politics. He has served as a county, state and national delegate for the Republican Party and a member of the State Central Committee (the governing body of the Utah Republican Party). He served several terms as a leader in his local precinct and was appointed by Governor John M. Huntsman and re-appointed by Governor Gary R. Herbert to serve as one of the youngest members of the prestigious Third District Judicial Nominating Commission. He spent several years on a National Congressional Commission started by President George W. Bush. Appointed by Congress and the President of the United States, Reyes conducted public hearings throughout the country to advise the Administration and Congress on Latino issues, including a National Museum of the American Latino.

FAMILY MATTERS

Reyes and his wife, Saysha, currently live in Cottonwood Heights and are the proud parents of 6 children between the ages of 4 and 16. In his free time, he enjoys playing morning basketball, coaching his kids in youth football, baseball, basketball, volleyball and soccer, taking walks or doing anything with Saysha, watching Sports Center, attending and speaking at Comic Cons, as well as cooking, shooting guns and watching mixed martial arts (now that his fighting days are over).