

Eric Holder

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Eric Himpton Holder, Jr. (born January 21, 1951) served as the 82nd Attorney General of the United States, from 2009 to 2015. Holder, serving in the administration of President Barack Obama, is the first African American to hold the position of U.S. Attorney General.^[1]

Holder previously served as a judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and as United States Attorney for the District of Columbia. While U.S. Attorney, he prosecuted Congressman Dan Rostenkowski (D–Illinois) for corruption charges related to his role in the Congressional Post Office scandal. Later, he was Deputy Attorney General of the United States and worked at the law firm of Covington & Burling in Washington, D.C. He was senior legal advisor to Barack Obama during Obama's presidential campaign and one of three members of Obama's vice-presidential selection committee. During the Fast and Furious investigation, he became the only cabinet member in U.S. history to be held in contempt of Congress.^[2]

He was succeeded by Loretta Lynch on April 27, 2015.^[3]

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Eric Holder



82nd United States Attorney General

In office

February 3, 2009 – April 27, 2015

President	Barack Obama
Deputy	David W. Ogden James Cole Sally Yates (Acting)
Preceded by	Michael Mukasey
Succeeded by	Loretta Lynch

United States Deputy Attorney General

In office

June 13, 1997 – January 20, 2001

President	Bill Clinton
Preceded by	Jamie Gorelick
Succeeded by	Larry Thompson

Personal details

Born	Eric Himpton Holder, Jr. January 21, 1951 New York City, New York, U.S.
Political party	Democratic
Spouse(s)	Sharon Malone

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Children	Maya Brooke Eric
Alma mater	Columbia University
Religion	Episcopalianism

Early life

Eric Himpton Holder, Jr. was born in the Bronx, New York, to parents with roots in Barbados.^{[4][5][6]} Holder's father, Eric Himpton Holder, Sr. (1905–1970) was born in Saint Joseph, Barbados and arrived in the United States at the age of 11.^{[7][8]} He later became a real estate broker. His mother, Miriam, was born in New Jersey, while his maternal grandparents were immigrants from Saint Philip, Barbados.^[8] Holder grew up in East Elmhurst, Queens, and attended public school until the age of 10. When entering the 4th grade he was selected to participate in a program for intellectually gifted students.^[9]

In 1969, he graduated from Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan and attended Columbia University, where he played freshman basketball. He earned a B.A. degree in American history in 1973.^[10] Holder received his J.D. from Columbia Law School, graduating in 1976. He worked for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund during his first summer and the United States Attorney during his second summer.^[9]

While at Columbia, Holder was a member of the Student Afro-American Society, which staged an occupation of the ROTC lounge and demanded that it be renamed the Malcolm X Lounge.^{[11][12][13][14]}

Career

After graduating from Columbia Law School, Holder joined the U.S. Justice Department's new Public Integrity Section, where he worked from 1976 to 1988. During his time there, he assisted in the prosecution of Democratic Congressman John Jenrette for bribery discovered in the Abscam sting operation.^[15] In 1988, Ronald Reagan appointed Holder to serve as a judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.^[16]

Holder stepped down from the bench in 1993 to accept an appointment as United States Attorney for the District of Columbia from President Bill Clinton. He was the first black American U.S. Attorney in that office.^[9] At the beginning of his tenure, he oversaw the conclusion of the corruption case against Dan Rostenkowski, part of the Congressional Post Office scandal.^[15] He was a U.S. Attorney until his elevation to Deputy Attorney General in 1997. Holder also served on The George Washington University's Board of Trustees in 1996 and 1997.

Deputy Attorney General

In 1997, after the retirement of Jamie Gorelick, Clinton nominated Holder to be the Deputy Attorney General under Janet Reno. Holder was confirmed several months later in the Senate by a unanimous vote.^[17] During his confirmation hearing, Holder's opposition to the death penalty was questioned, but he pledged his intention to cooperate with the current laws and Reno, saying, "I am not a proponent of the death penalty, but I will enforce the law as this Congress gives it to us."^[18] Holder was the first African-American to serve in that position.^[9]

As Deputy Attorney General, Holder's primary responsibilities were in the areas of budget and personnel issues; this also included resolving disputes among department heads and briefing reporters on policy initiatives, national security issue, and major investigations,^[9] including the FBI investigations into allegations of bribery and corruption in the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.^[19] Holder later advised Reno in the matters regarding the Independent Counsel statute. Reno made the decision to permit Kenneth Starr to expand his investigation into the Lewinsky affair, leading to Clinton's impeachment.^[9]

In the wake of the murders of Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Holder was a vocal proponent of new hate crimes laws in the United States. Holder said that the current laws placed major constraints on the ability of federal investigators and prosecutors to assist in these types of cases.^[20]

In his final days with the Clinton administration, Holder carried out his duties with Clinton's last-minute pardon of fugitive and Democratic contributor Marc Rich. Regarding discussions with the White House lawyers on the issue, Holder said he was at first "neutral" on the decision to grant Rich a pardon, but might lean in favor of it if there were national security benefits. Holder said that he was told that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak had asked Clinton to grant the pardon. Holder said that, at the time, he did not give the case much thought, because he did not think the pardon would be granted, as no fugitive had ever previously



Holder opening an Interagency Working Group meeting of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans hosted by the Department of Justice on October 18, 2000.

been granted a presidential pardon. He later said he wished that he had looked into it more thoroughly,^[21] and expressed regret over the incident. "I wish that I had ensured that the Department of Justice was more fully informed and involved in this pardon process", he said admitting the mistake.^[22]

Republicans on the House Government Reform Committee disagreed with Holder's version and alleged that he was a knowing participant, according to a 2003 report. They said Holder failed to fully inform prosecutors of the pending pardon, and they criticized his "neutral leaning favorable" opinion to Clinton.^[23]

Former FBI director, Louis Freeh, commented on the matter in 2009, saying that the Clinton White House had "used" Holder and kept both the FBI and the DOJ in the dark as to their full activities around the last minute pardons.^[24]



Official photo as Deputy Attorney General, ca. 2000

Holder briefly served as Acting Attorney General under President George W. Bush until the Senate confirmed Bush's nominee John Ashcroft.^[25]

Private practice

From 2001 until he became Attorney General, Holder worked as an attorney at Covington & Burling in Washington, D.C., representing clients such as Merck and the National Football League.^{[4][9]} He represented the NFL during its dog fighting investigation against Michael Vick.^[26]

In 2004, Holder helped negotiate an agreement with the Justice Department for Chiquita Brands International in a case that involved Chiquita's payment of "protection money" to the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), a group on the U.S. government's list of foreign terrorist organizations.^{[27][28]} In the agreement, Chiquita's officials pleaded guilty and paid a fine of \$25 million. Holder represented Chiquita

in the civil action that grew out of this criminal case.^[28] In March 2004, Holder and Covington & Burling were hired by Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich to act as a special investigator to the Illinois Gaming Board. The investigation was subsequently canceled on May 18, 2004.^[29]

The firm represented Guantanamo inmates but Holder "never participated directly in the firm's Guantanamo work" and was not expected to recuse himself from matters pertaining to it.^[30]

During his years in private practice, Holder represented the Swiss private bank UBS. Because of this, he recused himself from participating in the Department of Justice investigation of UBS's abetting of tax evasion by U.S. account-holders and the prosecution of Brad Birkenfeld. (As Attorney General, he also recused himself from the Roger Clemens contempt of Congress prosecution because the pitcher was once a client of Covington and Burling.)^{[31][32]}

While *District of Columbia v. Heller* was being heard by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2008, Holder joined the Reno-led amicus brief, which urged the Supreme Court to uphold Washington, D.C.'s handgun ban and said the position of the Department of Justice, from Franklin Delano Roosevelt through Clinton, was that the

Second Amendment does not protect an individual right to keep and bear arms for purposes unrelated to a State's operation of a well-regulated militia.^[33] Holder said that overturning the 1976 law "opens the door to more people having more access to guns and putting guns on the streets."^[34]

In late 2007, Holder joined then-Senator Barack Obama's presidential campaign as a senior legal advisor. He served on Obama's vice presidential selection committee.^[16]

Nomination as Attorney General of the United States

On December 1, 2008, President Obama announced that Holder would be his nominee for Attorney General of the United States.^[35]^[36] Obama praised his "toughness and independence." Obama went on to say that "[Holder] is deeply familiar with the law enforcement challenges we face: from terrorism to counter-intelligence; from white-collar crime to public corruption." Holder emphasized national security as a priority if confirmed, "We can and we must ensure that the American people remain secure and that the great Constitutional guarantees that define us as a nation are truly valued."^[37]

He was formally nominated on January 20, 2009 and was overwhelmingly approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee on January 28 with a bipartisan vote of 17 to 2.^[38]^[39] He was officially confirmed by the entire Senate on February 2, 2009, by a vote of 75 to 21 becoming the nation's first African-American Attorney General.^[40] His installation took place on March 27, 2009 at the Lisner Auditorium of George Washington University. As of his indication to step down on September 25, 2014, Holder had the fourth longest tenure of any Attorney General in U.S. history.^[41]

Tenure as Attorney General of the United States

Terrorism

Defending U.S. drone strikes and raids

As Attorney General, Holder was a staunch defender of the President's legal right to prosecute the War on Terror. In May 2011, Holder testified before Congress on the legality of the operation in which U.S. special forces killed Osama bin Laden earlier that month. Holder testified that the operation to kill bin Laden was legal, stating that international law allows for targeting enemy commanders. To support this point, Holder said that computer evidence seized from the raid demonstrated that bin Laden was still leading al-Qaeda. Moreover, Holder said, the Navy SEAL team that carried out the raid conducted itself in a manner consistent with American values, and that the parameters of the mission included capturing bin Laden.^[42]

Holder defended the legality of drone strikes against terrorists. Addressing the death of Anwar al-Aulaqi, an American citizen who was an alleged leader of and recruiter for al-Qaeda operating in Yemen, Holder said "The U.S. government's use of lethal force in self-defense against a leader of al-Qaeda or an associated force who presents an imminent threat of violent attack would not be unlawful." He outlined a three-part test to affirm the legality of the strikes: the terrorist poses an imminent threat of violence to the United States, capture is not possible and the operation is conducted in a manner consistent with the principles of the law of war.^[43]

Terrorism prosecutions

A major legacy of Holder's tenure as attorney general was a shifting of terrorism cases to the civilian federal courts.^{[44][45]} Under Holder, the DOJ successfully tried many terrorists in federal court, securing convictions and life sentences against a string of defendants, including Sulaiman Abu Ghaith (Osama bin Laden's spokesman); Ahmed Ghailani (a conspirator in the 1998 East Africa bombings); and Abu Hamza (an al-Qaeda operative).^{[44][45]} Faisal Shahzad (the attempted Times Square bomber); and Omar Farouk Abdulmutallab (the failed "underwear bomber") pleaded guilty in federal court and were sentenced to life imprisonment during Holder's term.^[46] During Holder's term, other terrorists—including including Najibullah Zazi (who plotted a New York subway attack), and Ahmed Abdulkadir Warsame (an al-Shabab supporter) pleaded guilty and cooperating with the government.^[45] Matt Olsen, the director of the National Counterterrorism Center from 2011 to 2014, wrote in 2015: "Through his persistence, Holder demonstrated the wisdom and value of prosecuting terrorists in civilian courts and cemented this approach for future administrations."^[45]



Holder with Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton on December 2, 2008

In November 2009, Holder announced that September 11 attack co-conspirators—Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Ramzi Bin al-Shibh, Walid bin Attash, Ali Abdul Aziz Ali and Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi—would be tried in New York City on federal charges of conspiracy and murder.^[45] Holder said at the time that the five would "stand trial in our justice system before an impartial jury under long-established rules and procedures."^[45] This plan was frustrated by Congress, however, and "congressional restrictions on transferring Guantánamo detainees to federal court had delayed the case indefinitely."^[45] In April 2011, Holder was forced to drop plans for a federal trial and instead refer the five to military commissions; at the time, Holder criticized Congress for interfering in the prosecution, saying: "[Congress has] taken one of the nation's most tested counterterrorism tools off the table and tied our hands in a way that would have serious ramifications."^[47] The military commissions remain "mired in procedural delays, legal uncertainty and continued controversy" today.^[45]

International cooperation against terrorism

In July 2010, Holder attended a heads of state summit of the African Union in Kampala, Uganda, where he told African leaders that the U.S. would continue to support the African Union peacekeeping mission in Somalia.^{[48][49]} Holder also vowed to work closer with African officials to stop terrorism, and announced that the FBI would be providing a team of forensic specialists to help assist in the investigation of the terrorist bombings in Kampala during the World Cup.^[49]

In a July 2014 speech to diplomats, academics, and national security officials in Oslo, Holder called for international cooperation against terrorism in Syria and Iraq in order to stem the flow of foreign fighters.^[50] Holder specifically urged other nations to adopt conspiracy laws; carry out better undercover operations; share traveler information through Interpol; and "seek to stop individuals from becoming radicalized in the first place by putting in place strong programs to counter violent extremism in its earliest stages."^{[50][51]}

Civil rights

Voting rights and redistricting

Holder is a staunch proponent of defending the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which was reauthorized in 2006 with bipartisan support. Holder has criticized new voter ID laws in Texas, Florida and other states, which he suggests may be politically motivated. In 2011, Holder said, "The reality is that in jurisdictions across the country, both overt and subtle forms of discrimination remain all too common." He went on to criticize Texas redistricting efforts, where the state had increased its population by four million people, most of whom are Latino, but the state had not allocated any new Congressional seats to represent Hispanic voters.^[52]

Under Holder's tenure, the DOJ successfully sued Shelby County, Alabama, for a violation of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. The small town of Calera had re-drawn the city council districts without receiving pre-clearance from the DOJ, which is required by Section 5 in order to ensure that Southern states do not use such tactics to weaken political representation for minority communities. For local elections, Calera had divided the African-American part of town, submerging it into two other districts, and eliminating the city's sole African-American councilman. Calera responded by arguing that the process of pre-clearance with the DOJ should no longer be required. On September 21, 2011, the federal district court upheld the constitutionality of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, but the decision was overturned by the Supreme Court in *Shelby County v. Holder*, which effectively struck down Section 5 of the act.

In May 2012, with over a dozen states pushing new voter identification laws, Holder stated that he believed these new laws would hamper the ability of the elderly, students and minorities to vote. Regarding voting rights, he said, "for the first time in our [lifetimes], we are failing to live up to one of our most noble ideals." Holder pledged that the DOJ would act "aggressively" in fighting these new laws. He went on to say that "We have to honor the generations that took extraordinary risks" to achieve the right to vote.^[53]

In a speech before the NAACP in July 2012, Holder went on to say that the Texas voter ID laws were a "political pretext to disenfranchise American citizens of their most precious right."^[54] Holder compared the practices of these states to those in the era of Jim Crow segregation. Holder said, "Many of those without IDs would have to travel great distances to get them – and some would struggle to pay for the documents they might need to obtain them. We call those poll taxes."^[55]

In April 2013, Holder vowed to continue to enforce federal voting rights laws within the scope of his power, regardless of how the United States Supreme Court decided in the pending case regarding voting rights.^{[56][57]}

Arizona SB 1070

In May 2010, Holder expressed concerns over reports he had received regarding Arizona SB 1070, Arizona's tough new immigration law. He said that he feared that the law could lead to racial profiling. Holder received criticism on the political right for criticizing the law before he had read it in its entirety.^{[58][59]}



Holder laying a wreath at the memorial site of the Wounded Knee Massacre in South Dakota

However, in July 2010, after the DOJ reviewed the law, Holder filed suit against Arizona on the grounds that the state law is preempted by federal law. Holder was quoted as saying, "I understand, first off, the frustration of the people of Arizona and the concerns that they have with regard to the amount of illegal immigration that occurs, but the solution that the Arizona legislature came up with is inconsistent with our federal Constitution."^[60]

A lawsuit challenging the controversial law was heard by the U.S. Supreme Court, and in June 2012, the Court majority of provisions were struck down in *Arizona v. United States*. Holder said that although he was pleased that much of the law had been struck down, he remained concerned over the burden it might place on local law enforcement to enforce federal immigration law and the possibility that it might be used to discriminate against the Latino community. He vowed to continue to monitor the impact of the law.^[61]

Holder has also stated that he supports comprehensive immigration reform, adding that it is a "matter of civil rights and human rights."^[62]

Same-sex marriage

In February 2011, Holder announced that the DOJ would no longer defend cases involving the Defense of Marriage Act in court. Holder had recommended this course of action to the President, arguing that the Defense of Marriage Act was unconstitutional, as laws that prohibit the marriage of gay couples do not meet the legal principle of strict scrutiny. Holder cited changing law in support of his action: "Much of the legal landscape has changed in the 15 years since Congress passed DOMA. The Supreme Court has ruled that laws criminalizing homosexual conduct are unconstitutional. Congress has repealed the military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy. Several lower courts have ruled DOMA itself to be unconstitutional." This decision was prompted by legal deadlines in two federal cases in Connecticut and New York, where same-sex married couples argued that DOMA's ban on federal benefits to those in gay marriages approved by the individual states, violates the Constitution's requirement of equal treatment.^{[63][64]}

In February 2012, Holder reaffirmed his position and stated that the DOJ would not defend DOMA in a legal challenge brought by members of the U.S. military, who were seeking benefits for their same-sex spouses, including: medical insurance, visitation rights in military hospitals and survivor benefits.^[65]

Holder has also advocated for the interests of the 36,000 same-sex partnerships where Americans are in relationships with non-U.S. citizens. In May 2011, Holder set aside the decision to deport Paul Dorman, an Irish man who was in a same-sex partnership with a New Jersey citizen. Holder then asked immigration officials to reconsider their decision in order to determine whether Dorman can be considered a spouse under New Jersey law and whether Dorman would be considered a spouse under immigration law were it not for the Defense of Marriage Act. This action prompted some other immigration judges to halt the deportation proceeds of other foreigners in same-sex couples.^{[66][67]}

Criminal investigations and prosecutions

Ted Stevens case

In 2009, Holder decided to drop the corruption case against Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska after evidence of prosecutorial misconduct (specifically, the withholding of exculpatory evidence) emerged.^[68] Holder was reportedly "horrified by the failure of prosecutors to turn over all relevant materials to the defense" and was

alarmed at rebukes of federal prosecutors by Judge Emmett Sullivan, a friend and former colleague of Holder.^[68] The DOJ formally moved to dismiss the indictment against Stevens (who had been convicted the previous year on seven counts, but had never been sentenced) on April 1, 2009.^[68] Holder issued a statement reading: "After careful review, I have concluded that certain information should have been provided to the defense for use at trial. In light of this conclusion, and in consideration of the totality of the circumstances of this particular case, I have determined that it is in the interest of justice to dismiss the indictment and not proceed with a new trial."^[68] Judge Emmet Sullivan threw out the case several days later, issuing an order stating: "There was never a judgment of conviction in this case. The jury's verdict is being set aside and has no legal effect."^[69] Holder ordered an review of the case by the Office of Professional Responsibility of DOJ.^[68] Judge Sullivan conducted an inquiry of his own, appointed two attorneys to conduct an investigation which resulted in "a blistering 514-page report" (released in May 2012) detailing what went wrong in the prosecution, and criticizing three specific federal prosecutors (one of whom committed suicide in 2010) for concealing evidence.^[70] Holder was praised for his efforts to repair the damage caused by the affair, which was seen as "a profound embarrassment for the Justice Department."^[71]

Marijuana

In 2010, in the run up to the referendum on California Proposition 19, which would have legalized marijuana use for personal recreation, Holder stated that the DOJ would continue to prosecute individuals on the federal level for possession of marijuana even if voters approved a ballot measure.^[72] However, in the run up to the successful marijuana legalization referendums on Colorado Amendment 64 and Washington Initiative 502 in 2012, Holder and the Department of Justice remained silent on how they would respond if the ballot measures were enacted by voters. On November 6, 2012, Colorado Amendment 64 and Washington Initiative 502 were passed with 55.3% and 55.7% of the votes respectively. This would lead to a new memo released by Deputy Attorney General James M. Cole on August 29, 2013.^[73] The memo instructed all United States Attorneys to not focus limited prosecutorial resources on state-authorized marijuana related activities, provided they follow eight priorities laid out by the Department of Justice.^[74]

Organized crime

On January 20, 2011, the FBI arrested 127 members of the La Cosa Nostra in New York City, including members of all Five Families of New York City and the DeCavalcante family of New Jersey.^{[75][76]} Holder spoke at a press conference afterwards, celebrating the largest single-day operation against the Mafia in United States history.^{[75][76]}

Leak investigations

Under Holder's leadership, the Department of Justice has brought six leak-related prosecutions against current or former U.S. government employees, while all previous Presidential administrations combined had tried a total of three such cases. Holder was reportedly "surprised" by news reports pointing out this statistic, and was said to have told associates he did not wish leak prosecutions to be his legacy.^[77] Several prominent leak prosecutions under Holder have involved communications between criminal defendants and journalists, and the pervasive use of traceable electronic communications between journalists and their sources provided the prosecution with a tool to determine the potential origin of published information.^[78] Under Holder, the

Justice Department has legally argued that journalists have no legal protection to maintain the confidentiality of their sources, and can be compelled by the government to reveal them, or potentially face criminal contempt charges.^[79]

On May 13, 2013, the Associated Press announced that telephone records for 20 of their reporters during a two-month period in 2012, had been seized by the Justice Department as part of the 2013 Department of Justice investigations of reporters. They described these acts as a "massive and unprecedented intrusion" into news-gathering operations.^{[80][81]} Holder testified under oath in front of the House Judiciary Committee and made it clear he recused himself from the leak investigations to avoid any appearance of a conflict of interest. Holder said his Deputy Attorney General, James Cole, was in charge of the AP investigation and would've ordered the subpoenas.^[82] When questioning turned to possibility of journalists being charged under the Espionage Act for reporting classified material, Holder stated: "With regard to the potential prosecution of the press for the disclosure of material, that is not something that I've ever been involved in, heard of or would think would be a wise policy."^[83]

It was later reported the DOJ monitored Fox News reporter, James Rosen's activities by tracking his visits to the State Department, through phone traces, timing of calls and his personal emails.^[84] NBC confirmed with the Justice Department that Holder had personally signed off on the Rosen subpoenas. They defended their decision and spoke about a balance between protecting national secrets and the 1st Amendment, stating: "After extensive deliberations, and after following all applicable laws, regulations and policies, the Department sought an appropriately tailored search warrant under the Privacy Protection Act."^[83] The revelation brought into question whether Holder was being intentionally misleading during his previous testimony. House Committee members sent an open letter to Holder, saying: "It is imperative that the committee, the Congress, and the American people be provided a full and accurate account of your involvement."^[85]

Department of Justice Smart on Crime Program

On August 12, 2013, at the American Bar Association's House of Delegates meeting, Holder announced the "Smart on Crime" program, which is "a sweeping initiative by the Justice Department that in effect renounces several decades of tough-on-crime anti-drug legislation and policies."^{[86][87]} Holder said the program "will encourage U.S. attorneys to charge defendants only with crimes "for which the accompanying sentences are better suited to their individual conduct, rather than excessive prison terms more appropriate for violent criminals or drug kingpins..."^{[86][87]} Running through Holder's statements, the increasing economic burden of over-incarceration was stressed.^{[86][87]} As of August 2013, the Smart on Crime program is not a legislative initiative but an effort "limited to the DOJ's policy parameters."^{[86][86][87]}



Barack Obama signing the Fair Sentencing Act in 2010

Additional actions

In 2009, Holder announced and oversaw the federal government spending of \$1 billion in grants to law enforcement agencies in every state to pay for the hiring of police officers. The money comes from the stimulus bill the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and covered the salaries of 4,699 law enforcement officers for three years.^[88] ^[89]

When questioned about weapons regulations during a news conference to announce the arrest of Mexican drug cartel members, Holder stated that the Obama administration would seek to re-institute the expired Federal Assault Weapons Ban, which he strongly supports.^[90]^[91]

After the U.S. government filed suit against the Swiss bank UBS AG, whom Holder had represented during his time in private practice, the attorney general recused himself from all legal matters concerning the bank, which stands accused of conspiracy in U.S. tax fraud.^[92]^[93]

Holder presented friend and predecessor Janet Reno, Attorney General under the Clinton Administration, the American Judicature Society's (AJS) Justice Award on April 17, 2009. The award is the highest given by the AJS, and recognizes significant contributions toward improvements in the administration of justice within the United States.^[94]

After the United States diplomatic cables leak in December 2010, Holder said that "We have an active, ongoing, criminal investigation with regard to this matter. We are not in a position as yet to announce the result of that investigation, but the investigation is—is ongoing. To the extent that we can find anybody who was involved in the breaking of American law and who has put at risk the assets and the people that I have described, they will be held responsible," Holder said. "They will be held accountable." Holder's comments leave open a crucial question, which is whether the investigators are looking at how WikiLeaks obtained the documents (not unlike probing a news organization's source), or if they're looking at whether WikiLeaks staffers violated criminal law and should be the ones indicted.^[95]

In December 8, 2014, Holder unveiled a new policy banning profiling on the basis of religion, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, and gender identity by federal law enforcement agencies.^[96] However, the new policy will not apply to screenings at border and airport, as well as in intelligence operations.^[97]

Opinion of Bush policies

During his confirmation hearings, Holder agreed with Senator Patrick Leahy, Democrat of Vermont, that a technique used by U.S. interrogators under the Bush administration known as waterboarding is torture.^[98] Consequently, Senate Republicans delayed the confirmation vote on Holder though Senate Democrats accused them of applying a double standard.^[99] He has been critical of Enhanced interrogation techniques and the NSA warrantless surveillance program, accusing the Bush administration of a "disrespect for the rule of law... [that is] not only wrong, it is destructive in our struggle against terrorism."^[100]

Holder has stated that he favors closing the Guantanamo Bay detention camp; in 2002 he said that the detainees are not technically entitled to Geneva Convention protections.^[101]^[102] In March 2011 Holder left open the possibility that the Guantánamo Bay prison camp might remain open beyond President Obama's first term. Asked in a congressional hearing whether the prison would be closed by November 2012, Holder said: "I don't know." He said the Justice Department has established a task force to look at each of the 172

detainees being held at the Guantánamo prison to address how they should be dealt with. Holder's comments come just weeks after CIA Director Leon Panetta told a Senate panel that Osama bin Laden would probably be shipped to and held at the Guantánamo Bay facility if he were captured.^[103]

He is opposed to the Bush administration's implementation of the Patriot Act, saying it is "bad ultimately for law enforcement and will cost us the support of the American people."^{[104][105]}

Racism

Holder gave a speech on racism on February 18, 2009, in the midst of Black History Month. "Though this nation has proudly thought of itself as an ethnic melting pot in things racial, we have always been, and we, I believe, continue to be, in too many ways, essentially a nation of cowards," said Holder. "Though race-related issues continue to occupy a significant portion of our political discussion, and though there remain many unresolved racial issues in this nation, we, average Americans, simply do not talk enough with each other about things racial," he said.^[106]

The speech stirred some controversy, with some reacting favorably to Holder's comments and others sharply criticizing them.^{[107][108]} Obama later clarified Holder's comments, saying that "I think it's fair to say that if I had been advising my attorney general, we would have used different language.... I think the point that he was making is that we're oftentimes uncomfortable with talking about race until there's some sort of racial flare-up or conflict, and that we could probably be more constructive in facing up to the painful legacy of slavery and Jim Crow and discrimination."^{[109][110]}

Federal hate crime charges in knockout game

On December 26, 2013, the U.S. Department of Justice filed federal hate-crime charges against a Texas man (who is white) accused of using the "knockout game" to target a black man. This was the first action taken by the Federal government to combat the alleged trend.^[111]

New Black Panther Party voter intimidation incident

In May 2009, Holder's Department of Justice completed a civil suit originally brought by J. Christian Adams of the Bush Justice Department against the New Black Panther Party, its chairman, and two of its members for voter intimidation due to their conduct during the 2008 election. Two members of the Party had stood outside a polling station during the election in paramilitary uniforms, one carrying a nightstick. Claiming a lack of evidence, the Department of Justice dropped charges against the party, its chairman, and one of the two members who had stood outside the polling station. With the evidence presented, the Department of Justice successfully obtained a narrow injunction against the other. Former lawyers who had served under the Bush Administration have stated that the current DOJ under Holder is unwilling to prosecute minorities for civil rights violations. Three other Justice Department lawyers, in recent interviews, gave the same description of the department's culture, which department officials strongly deny.



Alleged instance of voter intimidation in Philadelphia during the 2008 US presidential election.

In the months after the case ended, tensions persisted. Eventually, Christopher Coates (of the Justice's Civil Rights Division) acknowledged telling attorneys at a September 2009 lunch that the Obama administration was interested in filing cases – under a key voting rights section – only on behalf of minorities.^[112]

During a meeting with a House subcommittee, Holder argued that the behavior (standing in a menacing way while brandishing a weapon) of the New Black Panther Party was not comparable to historical voter intimidation against minorities, which often involved acts of violence and murder. Holder said, "When you compare what people endured in the South in the '60s to try to get the right to vote for African Americans, to compare what people subjected to that with what happened in Philadelphia... I think does a great disservice to people who put their lives on the line for my people."^[113]

Critics have interpreted this comment as evidence of racial bias on Holder's part, with conservative James Taranto^[114] of the Wall Street Journal arguing that "If he [Holder] approaches the job with the attitude that any group smaller than all Americans is 'my people', he is the wrong man for the position."^[115] Claiming the issue was politicized from the start,^[112] Democrats have argued that those on the political right, particularly Adams, used this incident for purely political gain.^[113]

Operation Fast and Furious

In May 2011, House Oversight Committee chairman, California Republican Rep. Darrell Issa and Iowa Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley sent Attorney General Holder a letter requesting details about Operation Fast and Furious, which had been a failed federal firearms sting operation, which had allowed some 2,000 weapons to reach Mexican drug gangs.^{[116][117]} Grassley and Issa urged Holder to cooperate and turn over subpoenaed records that would reveal the scope of the alleged government coverup.^[118]

Contempt of Congress

In October 2011, 7,600 pages of documents were released that Issa claimed may have indicated Holder was sent memos in regard to Operation Fast and Furious earlier than he at first claimed,^{[119][120]} contradicting Holder's sworn testimony before the House Judiciary Committee in which he said he only recently became aware of Operation Fast and Furious in the first half of 2011.^{[121][122]} In April 2012, Issa announced that his committee was drafting a Contempt of Congress resolution against Holder in response to the committee being "stonewalled by the Justice Department."^[123] On June 19, 2012, Issa met with Holder in person to discuss the requested documents. Holder said he offered to provide the documents to Issa on the condition that Issa provided his assurance that doing so would satisfy the committee subpoenas and resolve the dispute. Issa rejected the offer. Holder then told reporters "They rejected what I thought was an extraordinary offer on our part."^[124] On June 20, 2012, the Oversight Committee voted 23–17 along party lines to hold Holder in contempt of Congress for not releasing documents the committee had requested.^[125] A memo from Holder's office said of the vote: "It's an election-year tactic intended to distract attention."^[126]

Although this vote was not directly relevant to gun legislation, the National Rifle Association announced that they would be scoring the contempt vote, due to Holder's previous stances on gun control legislation, placing political pressure on Democrats that wished to avoid repercussions from the gun lobby.^[127] On June 28, 2012, Holder became the first U.S. Attorney General in history to be held in both criminal^[128] and civil^[129] contempt. He was held, by a bipartisan vote,^[130] in contempt by the House of Representatives in a

255–67 vote, with 17 Democrats voting for the measure, 2 Republicans voting against the measure.^[130] The remaining Democrats refused to vote and marched out of the House, led by Nancy Pelosi, as a means of protesting the actions of Republicans. Holder responded to the vote, describing it as "the regrettable culmination of what became a misguided and politically motivated investigation in an election year."^[131]

The congressional action evoked reactions from across the political spectrum. Texas governor and Republican presidential candidate Rick Perry called on Holder to resign, stating "America simply cannot tolerate an attorney general who arms the very criminals he is supposed to protect us from".^[132] Republican Sen. John Cornyn, ranking member of the Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and Border Security also called on Holder to resign.^[133] Among those opposing the contempt citation, Democratic Rep. Elijah Cummings, the ranking member on the United States House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform said, "Holder has acted honorably; he's done everything he could to allow us to do our job, which is to investigate this matter."^[134]

President Obama and the Justice Department declined to prosecute the attorney general on the contempt charge citing executive privilege.^[135]

In September 2012, after a nineteen-month review, the United States Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General cleared the Attorney General of any wrongdoing with regard to Fast and Furious, stating that there was "no evidence" that Holder knew about the operation before early 2011. The report did cite fourteen lower ranking officials for possible disciplinary action.^[136] Holder responded to the internal investigation, saying "It is unfortunate that some were so quick to make baseless accusations before they possessed the facts about these operations – accusations that turned out to be without foundation and that have caused a great deal of unnecessary harm and confusion."^[137]

In retrospective, David Weigel of Bloomberg Businessweek called the contempt of Congress vote "both popular and stunningly ineffective, enraging Holder and turning him into a more outspoken and implacable foe of Republican policies on voting rights and policing."^[138] In August 2014, federal judge Amy Berman Jackson ordered the Justice Department to provide Congress with some of the previously withheld documents that had led Congress to hold Holder in contempt.^[139]

Operation Choke Point

Operation Choke Point is an ongoing initiative of the United States Department of Justice that was announced in 2013,^[140] which is investigating banks in the United States and the business they do with payment processors, payday lenders, and other companies believed to be at higher risk for fraud, money laundering, and terrorist financing. This operation, first disclosed in August 2013 Wall Street Journal story^[141] is controversial for the potential threat to due process; the government is pressuring the financial industry to cut off the companies' access to banking services, without first having shown that the targeted companies are violating the law.^{[142][143][144][145]}

Refusal to prosecute financial institutions

On March 6, 2013, Holder testified to the Senate Judiciary Committee that the size of large financial institutions has made it difficult for the Justice Department to bring criminal charges when they are suspected of crimes, because such charges can threaten the existence of a bank and therefore their

interconnectedness may endanger the national or global economy. (See financial contagion). "Some of these institutions have become too large," Holder told the Committee, "It has an inhibiting impact on our ability to bring resolutions that I think would be more appropriate."^{[146][147]}

In a January 29, 2013 letter to Holder, Senators Sherrod Brown and Charles Grassley had criticized this Justice Department policy citing "important questions about the Justice Department's prosecutorial philosophy."^[148] After receipt of a DoJ response letter, Brown and Grassley issued a statement saying, "The Justice Department's response is aggressively evasive. It does not answer our questions. We want to know how and why the Justice Department has determined that certain financial institutions are 'too big to jail' and that prosecuting those institutions would damage the financial system."^{[149][150]}

Holder has financial ties to at least one law firm benefiting from de facto immunity to prosecution.^[151] Prosecution rates against crimes by large financial institutions are at 20-year lows.^[151] Holder has also endorsed the notion that prosecutors, when deciding to pursue white-collar crimes, should give special consideration to "collateral consequences" of bringing charges against large corporate institutions, as outlined in a 1999 memorandum by Holder. Nearly a decade later Holder, as head of the Department of Justice, put this into practice and has demonstrated the weight "collateral consequences" has by repeatedly sought and reached deferred prosecution and non-prosecution agreements and settlements with large financial institutions such as J.P. Morgan Chase, HSBC, Countrywide Mortgage, Wells Fargo, Goldman Sachs, and others where the institution pays a fine or penalty but faces no criminal charges and admits no wrongdoing.^{[152][153]} Whereas in the previous decade the Bush administration's Department of Justice often sought criminal charges against individuals of large institutions regardless of "collateral consequences" such as cases involving Enron, Adelphia Communications Corporation, Tyco International, and others.

In September 2014, he described the department's rationale in a speech at New York University:

"Responsibility remains so diffuse, and top executives so insulated," Holder said, "that any misconduct could again be considered more a symptom of the institution's culture than a result of the willful actions of any single individual."^[154]

Resolution proposing articles of impeachment

On November 14, 2013, Representative Pete Olson (R-TX), along with 19 Republicans, introduced a resolution proposing Articles of Impeachment against Holder. The Articles cited Holder for his alleged role in Operation Fast and Furious, refusal to defend the Defense of Marriage Act in court, failing to prosecute anyone involved in the IRS targeting of groups based on name and political theme, and for allegedly perjuring himself by stating that he had no knowledge of any potential prosecution of members of the media for disclosure of classified material.^{[155][156]} As of June 2014, there were 26 co-sponsors to the bill.^[157]

Resignation

Holder announced his resignation on September 25, 2014, citing personal reasons. He remained in office until the Senate confirmed his successor, Loretta Lynch.^{[41][158][159]}

Return to private practice

In July 2015, Holder rejoined Covington & Burling, the law firm at which he worked before becoming Attorney General. The law firm's clients have included many of the large banks Holder declined to prosecute for their alleged role in the financial crisis. Matt Taibbi of Rolling Stone opined about the move, "I think this is probably the single biggest example of the revolving door that we've ever had."^[160]^[161]

Personal life

Holder is married to Sharon Malone, an obstetrician. The couple has three children.^[162] Malone's sister was Vivian Malone Jones, famous for her part in the Stand in the Schoolhouse Door which led to integration at the University of Alabama.^[163] Holder has been involved with various mentoring programs for inner-city youths. He is also an avid basketball fan,^[164] and the uncle of former NBA All-Star Jeff Malone.^[26]

Awards

In May 2008, while still in private practice, Legal Times magazine named Holder as one of the "Greatest Washington Lawyers of the Past 30 Years," describing Holder as one of the "Visionaries."^[165] Also in that year, Holder was named by the National Law Journal as one of "the 50 Most Influential Minority Lawyers in America."^[166] The National Law Journal commended Holder's practice in the areas of civil litigation and white-collar defense, as well as his work as a national co-chair for Obama's campaign.^[167]

In June 2009, the Government of Barbados announced that it would begin a project to determine the first 100 Great Barbadians which would be selected among the public of Barbados. At the announcement of the project it was announced that Holder was the first candidate to be nominated toward the final list.^[168]

On May 16, 2010, Holder delivered the commencement address at Boston University, for both the all-university ceremony and the School of Law. In addition, he was presented with an honorary Doctor of Laws degree.^[169] On May 22, 2011, Holder delivered the commencement address at the University of Virginia School of Law. Holder encouraged the graduates to emulate Virginia Law alumnus Robert F. Kennedy's legacy of service.^[170] On May 19, 2009, Holder was chosen by his alma mater, Columbia College, to be its Class Day Speaker.^[171]

In August 2012, the National Urban League named Holder as a recipient of their "Living Legend" award along with singer Stevie Wonder.^[172]

Holder delivered the commencement address at Harvard Law School in May 2012,^[173] and at the UC Berkeley School of Law in May 2013.^[174]

See also

- Barack Obama Supreme Court candidates

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External links

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- Eric Holder (http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/Profiles/Eric_Holder_topic.html) collected

- news and commentary at The Washington Post
- Appearances (<http://www.c-span.org/person/?ericholder>) on C-SPAN
- Eric Holder (http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/h/eric_h_holder_jr/index.html) collected news and commentary at The New York Times
- Works by or about Eric Holder (<https://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-no89-1286>) in libraries (WorldCat catalog)
- Justice Department Bio of Holder as Deputy Attorney General (https://web.archive.org/web/*/www.usdoj.gov/dag/dagbio.htm) at the Wayback Machine
- Contemporary Black Biography (<http://www.answers.com/topic/eric-h-holder-jr>)
- Covington & Burling (<http://web.archive.org/web/20080808111527/http://www.cov.com/eholder>)
- The History Makers (<http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/biography.asp?bioindex=954&category=Lawmakers&occupation=Attorney&name=Eric%20Holder>)
- Homeland Security Policy Institute (http://www.gwumc.edu/hspi/steering/e_holder_bio.htm)
- Eric Holder's federal campaign contribution report (http://www.newsmeat.com/washington_political_donations/Eric_Holder.php) at NewsMeat
- Authenticated text, audio, video of Eric Holder Speech at the Department of Justice African American History Month Program (<http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/ericholderdojaahistory.htm>) AmericanRhetoric.com

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Preceded by Janet Reno	United States Attorney General Acting 2001	Succeeded by John Ashcroft
Preceded by Michael Mukasey	United States Attorney General 2009–2015	Succeeded by Loretta Lynch

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Artist: Simmie Knox

Eric Holder

Eighty-Second Attorney General, 2009-2015

Eric Holder was sworn in as the 82nd Attorney General of the United States on February 3, 2009 by Vice-President Joe Biden. President Barack Obama announced his intention to nominate Mr. Holder on December 1, 2008.

In 1997, Mr. Holder was named by President Clinton to be the Deputy Attorney General, the first African-American named to that post. Prior to that he served as U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia. In 1988, Mr. Holder was nominated by President Reagan to become an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

Mr. Holder, a native of New York City, attended public schools there, graduating from Stuyvesant High School where he earned a Regents Scholarship. He attended Columbia College, majored in American History, and graduated in 1973. He graduated from Columbia Law School in 1976.

While in law school, he clerked at the N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense Fund and the Department of Justice's Criminal Division. Upon graduating, he moved to Washington and joined the Department of Justice as part of the Attorney General's Honors Program. He was assigned to the newly formed Public Integrity Section in 1976 and was tasked to investigate and prosecute official corruption on the local, state and federal levels.

Prior to becoming Attorney General, Mr. Holder was a litigation partner at Covington & Burling LLP in Washington.

Mr. Holder lives in Washington with his wife, Dr. Sharon Malone, a physician, and their three children.

Speeches of Attorney General Eric H. Holder

About the Artist: Simmie Knox

Simmie Knox was born in 1935 in Aliceville, Alabama. After grad school, he exhibited abstract works and taught at various universities and public schools. Since 1981, he has specialized in oil portraiture, and has been commissioned by everyone from U.S. Supreme Court Justices to celebrities. In 2004, Knox unveiled official portraits of President Bill Clinton and first lady Hillary Clinton at the White House—becoming the first black artist to paint an official presidential portrait.

Updated August 21, 2015

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Partner

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Eric Holder advises clients on complex investigations and litigation matters, including those that are international in scope and involve significant regulatory enforcement issues and substantial reputational concerns. Mr. Holder, who was a partner at Covington from 2001 to 2009, rejoined the firm after serving for six years as the 82nd Attorney General of the United States.

Before his service as Attorney General, Mr. Holder maintained a wide-ranging investigations and litigation practice at Covington. Among numerous significant engagements, he led the firm's representation of a major multi-national agricultural company in related civil, criminal, and investigative matters; acted as counsel to a special investigative committee of the board of directors of a Fortune 50 technology company; successfully tried a complex discrimination lawsuit on behalf of a leading financial services company; and represented several life sciences companies in litigation and investigations.

Mr. Holder served as Attorney General from February 2009 to April 2015. As the third longest serving Attorney General in U.S. history and the first African American to hold that office, Mr. Holder is an internationally recognized leader across a broad range of regulatory enforcement, criminal justice, and national security issues. In 2014, Time magazine named Mr. Holder to its list of 100 Most Influential People, noting that he had "worked tirelessly to ensure equal justice."

Including his tenure as Attorney General, Mr. Holder has served in government for more than thirty years, having been appointed to various positions requiring U.S. Senate confirmation by Presidents Obama, Clinton and Reagan.

Previous Employment

Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice (2009-2015)

Partner, Covington & Burling (2001-2009)

Deputy Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice (1997-2001)

U.S. Attorney, District of Columbia (1993-1997)

Associate Judge, Superior Court of the District of Columbia (1988-1993)

Trial Attorney, Public Integrity Section of the U.S. Department of Justice's Criminal Division (1976-1988)

News and Insights

Beyond His Tenure, Holder Hasn't Left The Civil Rights Fight

Media Mention

December 12, 2015, NPR

Eric Holder was interviewed by NPR's Michel Martin to discuss his work as Attorney General and what's ahead for him at Covington. According to Holder, his "life is still going to be focused on dealing with voting rights issues."

Margaret Richardson Appointed to Uber Advisory Board

Press Release

November 24, 2015

WASHINGTON, DC, November 24, 2015 - Uber has appointed Covington's Margaret Richardson as a member of its newly formed Safety Advisory Board. Uber currently provides over 300 million rides a day to customers worldwide through the use of an app. The Safety Advisory Board will review Uber safety practices and advise on the company's consideration of additional ...

Eric Holder Named LDF's Thurgood Marshall Lifetime Achievement Award Winner

Press Release

November 5, 2015

WASHINGTON, DC, November 5, 2015 - The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund (LDF) named Covington partner and former US Attorney General Eric Holder as the recipient of its Thurgood Marshall Lifetime Achievement Award, recognizing his lifelong efforts to advance civil rights. LDF recognized Mr. Holder for his work at the US Department of Justice to fight ...

Favourite son

Media Mention

July 7, 2015, CDR News

Former AG Eric Holder returns to former D.C. law firm

Media Mention

July 6, 2015, The Washington Post

Former U.S. attorney general Holder to re-join Covington as Washington partner

Media Mention

July 6, 2015, The Lawyer

Holder: big penalties changed bank culture

Media Mention

July 6, 2015, FT

Eric Holder says he wouldn't serve on the Supreme Court

Media Mention

July 6, 2015, Politico

Eric Holder, Former Attorney General, Returning to Covington & Burling Law Firm

Media Mention

July 6, 2015, NBC News

Eric Holder Returns to Covington & Burling

Media Mention

July 6, 2015, The New York Times

Eric Holder, former U.S. attorney general, to return to law firm

Media Mention

July 6, 2015, Reuters

Former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder Returns to Covington

Press Release

July 6, 2015

WASHINGTON, DC, July 6, 2015 — Former U.S. Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr., is returning to Covington as a partner after more than six years of service as the nation's top law enforcement officer. Mr. Holder will be resident in the firm's Washington office and focus on complex investigations and litigation matters, including matters that are international ...

Eric Holder: U.S. May Need to Sue To Enforce Gay Marriage Ruling

Media Mention

July 5, 2015, The Wall Street Journal

Holder's Return to Covington Was Six Years in the Making

Media Mention

July 5, 2015, National Law Journal

Covington Receives 124 Individual Mentions in 2009 Edition of Best Lawyers

Press Release

9/29/2008

WASHINGTON, DC, September 29, 2008 — Covington & Burling LLP received 124 individual mentions in 40 areas of law in the 2009 edition of The Best Lawyers in America. This annual compilation of top US lawyers is based on peer-review surveys and is used as a referral guide in the legal profession. The Covington lawyers recognized are as follows: Administrative: ...

Chambers USA Gives Covington 81 Individual, 45 Practice Nods

Press Release

6/16/2008

WASHINGTON, DC, June 16, 2008 — Covington & Burling LLP received 81 individual mentions and 45 practice mentions in the newly released 2008 Chambers USA. The guidebook, which ranks lawyers by state and national practice area, is designed to identify the most skilled legal practitioners based on the qualities most valued by clients. Here are the Covington ...

Two Covington Partners Among National Law Journal's '50 Most Influential Minority Lawyers'

Press Release

5/27/2008

WASHINGTON, DC, May 27, 2008 — The National Law Journal has named Covington & Burling LLP partners Eric Holder and Thomas Williamson to its survey of "The 50 Most Influential Minority Lawyers in America." The first-ever list, which honors lawyers who have had a national impact in their legal fields during the past five years, is featured in the NLJ's May 26 ...

Covington's Eizenstat, Gesell, Holder, Horsky, and Ruff Among Legal Times' 'Greatest Washington Lawyers of Past 30 Years'

Press Release

5/27/2008

WASHINGTON, DC, May 27, 2008 — In connection with its 30th anniversary, Legal Times' May 19 anniversary issue features a salute to the "Greatest Washington Lawyers of the Past 30 Years." The special report recognizes 30 lawyers each in the categories "Champions," "Visionaries," and "Pioneers." Covington partners Stuart Eizenstat and Eric Holder were named, ...

Washingtonian Magazine Names 19 Covington Attorneys 'Top

Press Release

Lawyers'

11/30/2007

WASHINGTON, DC, November 30, 2007 — Nineteen Covington & Burling LLP attorneys are recognized as “Top Lawyers” in the December 2007 issue of Washingtonian magazine. The list, compiled by the magazine’s editorial staff based on peer recommendations, identifies leading lawyers in the Greater Washington area. Of the “Top Lawyers,” Washingtonian identified 30 as the ...

Covington Receives 115 Individual Mentions in 2008 Edition of Best Lawyers

Press Release

9/6/2007

WASHINGTON, DC, September 6, 2007 — Covington & Burling LLP received 115 individual mentions in 38 areas of law in the 2008 edition of The Best Lawyers in America. This annual compilation of top US lawyers is based on peer-review surveys and is used as a referral guide in the legal profession. The recipients are as follows: Administrative: E. Edward Bruce and ...

Covington Receives 44 Practice, 74 Individual Mentions in 2007 Chambers USA Guide

Press Release

June 18, 2007

WASHINGTON, DC, June 18, 2007 — Covington & Burling LLP received 44 practice mentions and 74 individual mentions in the newly released 2007 Chambers USA guidebook. The 2007 edition of Chambers USA attempts to identify the most skilled legal practitioners throughout the country based on the qualities most valued by clients. Covington attorneys have been ...

Practices

Litigation and Investigations

- White Collar Defense and Investigations

Regulatory and Public Policy

- Public Policy and Government Affairs

Education

Columbia Law School, J.D., 1976

Columbia College, B.A., 1973

Government Service

U.S. Department of Justice

Bar Admissions

District of Columbia

New York

bio.



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Eric Holder

Legal Professional (1951–)

Serving under President Barack Obama, Eric Holder was the first African-American attorney general of the United States.

Synopsis

Eric Holder was born on January 21, 1951 in New York City. He attended Columbia Law School. Holder was an associate judge of the D.C. Superior Court under President Reagan; U.S. attorney for Washington, D.C., then deputy attorney general under Clinton; and for Obama, Holder was senior legal advisor to his presidential campaign, later becoming the first African-American Attorney General in history. He announced his forthcoming resignation in September of 2014, succeeded in 2015 by Loretta Lynch.

NAME

Eric Holder

OCCUPATION

Legal Professional

BIRTH DATE

January 21, 1951 (age
65)

EDUCATION

Columbia Law School,
Stuyvesant High School,
Columbia University

PLACE OF BIRTH

New York, New York

ZODIAC SIGN

Aquarius

Early Education and Career

Judge, lawyer, political advisor. Born Eric Himpton Holder, Jr. on January 2, 1951, to parents Eric and Miriam Holder in New York City. His mother was a telephone operator and his father was a real estate broker. His parents both held strong ties to Barbados; previously his father had emigrated from Saint Joseph, and his mother's family emigrated from Saint Philip. The eldest of two brothers, Holder grew up

in the predominantly black neighborhood of East Elmhurst, Queens.

Holder attended a public school in his neighborhood until the fourth grade, when he was selected to participate in a program for intellectually gifted children. The school consisted of predominantly white students, which Holder says forced him to keep his "foot in both worlds." This only became more apparent when it came time to attend high school. While his friends at home chose to attend public schools in Queens, Holder's white schoolmates were taking an exam to enter the city's most elite institutions. Holder got into the prestigious Stuyvesant High School, an hour-and-a-half commute from his home, which pulled him even farther away from his neighborhood friends and community.

Holder says he concentrated mainly on his studies in high school, and felt overwhelmed by the rigorous academic demands placed on him at Stuyvesant. But the young man stayed well rounded; he was selected as the captain of the basketball team, and in 1969 he earned his high school diploma, as well as a Regents Scholarship.

That same year, Holder entered college at Columbia University. He played freshman basketball, attended shows at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, spent Saturdays mentoring local kids, and became active in civil rights. He received his bachelor's degree in American history from Columbia University in 1973. In 1974, he began attending Columbia Law School while also clerking for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the Department of Justice's Criminal Division.

In 1976, Holder earned his law degree, and the Department of Justice gave him a job as part of the attorney general's honors program. He was assigned to the newly formed Public Integrity Section, which investigated and prosecuted official corruption on the local, state and federal levels.

Appointments Under Reagan, Clinton and Bush

In 1988, Holder was nominated by former President [Ronald Reagan](#) to become an associate judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. During this time he presided over hundreds of civil and criminal trials. Holder was then nominated by President [Bill Clinton](#) to serve as the U.S. attorney for Washington, D.C. in 1993. He was the first African American to hold the position. During his four-year term, he created a domestic violence unit, a community prosecution project and a program for restricting gun laws.

In 1997, Holder made history yet again when President Clinton nominated him to be the deputy attorney general. Holder was quickly confirmed several months later by a unanimous vote in the Senate. He was the first African American elected to the position as well as the highest-ranking black person in law enforcement in the history of the United States at that time.

As deputy attorney general, Holder developed and issued the "Holder Memorandum," which spelled out the guidelines for the criminal prosecution of corporations. He also developed rules for the regulation of health care, and assembled a task force that determined how to investigate criminal investigations of high-ranking federal employees.

At the president's request, Holder created the organization, Lawyers for One America. The group was designed to bring greater diversity to the law profession and increase pro bono work among the nation's lawyers. Holder also briefly served under President [George W. Bush](#) as Acting Attorney General, during the pending confirmation of Attorney General [John Ashcroft](#).

After serving in this position for four years, Holder joined the private sector to work at the law firm Covington and Burling LLC, in 2001. He represented clients such as the National Football League during its investigation of quarterback [Michael Vick](#), and the negotiation of an agreement with the Justice Department for Chiquita Brands International.

In addition to his normal workload, Holder serves on a number of philanthropic boards, including the Columbia University board, the Save the Children Foundation, and Concerned Black Men, a group that seeks to help troubled youth in D.C. He has also been nationally recognized for his work in law; he was featured in the 2007 edition of The Best Lawyers in America, and in 2008 he was named by The National Law Journal as one of "The Most 50 Influential Minority Lawyers in America" as well as by Legal Times for being one of the "Greatest Washington Lawyers of the Past 30 Years."

Role in Obama Administration

In late 2007, Holder joined Senator [Barack Obama](#)'s presidential campaign as a senior legal advisor, and later served as one of three members on Obama's vice-presidential selection committee. Holder was appointed and confirmed as the 82nd U.S. attorney general in 2009, making him the first African-American attorney general in history.

With a tenure marked by civil rights work and calls to speak more openly about racial discrimination in the U.S., Holder also faced major controversy over the case of missing documents in relation to Operation Fast and Furious, which focused on tracking the sales of arms among Mexican drug cartels.

In August of 2014, Holder visited Ferguson, Missouri in the wake of the shooting death of an unarmed African-American male by police officer Darren Wilson, with differing accounts of the incident. With waves of protests and both a police and national guard presence, Holder launched a Justice Department inquiry into the killing, ultimately corroborating Wilson's account of what happened ruling and declaring that he had not committed any civil rights violations. However, after reviewing Ferguson's overall policing practices, the Justice Department found rampant constitutional violations that included unwarranted use of force and arrests of a population under duress, with racist slurs and images found in official governmental emails as well.

On September 25, 2014, the Justice Dept. announced that Holder would be resigning from his position, with an exit from his post having been in the works. [Loretta Lynch](#) succeeded Holder as attorney general in spring of the following year.

Holder is married to obstetrician Sharon Malone. The couple has three children: Maya, Brooke and Eric. They reside in Washington, D.C.

Article Title

Eric Holder Biography

Author

Biography.com Editors

Website Name

The Biography.com website

URL

<http://www.biography.com/people/eric-holder-391612>

Access Date

March 18, 2016

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A&E Television Networks

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Eric Holder

Government Official / Lawyer

Born: 21 January 1951
 Birthplace: The Bronx, New York
 Best known as: Attorney General of the United States, 2009-2015

Name at birth: Eric Holder, Jr.

Eric Holder is the veteran lawyer who served as U.S. Attorney General under President [Barack Obama](#) from 2009-15. Eric Holder is a graduate of Columbia University (1973) and Columbia Law School (1976). He joined the Department of Justice straight out of law school, working his way through the ranks until becoming an Associate Judge on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia in 1988. He remained a judge until appointed by [Bill Clinton](#) as U.S. District Attorney for the District of Columbia (1993-97), then served as Deputy Attorney General under [Janet Reno](#) from 1997 until 2001, when Clinton left office. Holder's last days in that post were tangled in controversy after he gave an opinion of "neutral, leaning toward favorable" for Clinton's last-minute pardon of fugitive financier [Marc Rich](#). The Rich pardon caused an outcry, and Holder was blamed for his opinion and accused of being too chummy with Rich's lawyer, Jack Quinn. Holder then went into private practice with the corporate legal firm of Covington & Burling in 2001 and remained there through 2008. In 2007 he became a co-chair of [Barack Obama's](#) presidential campaign. Obama won the presidency in November 2008, and nominated Eric Holder to become Attorney General; Holder was confirmed by the Senate on 2 February 2009. Eric Holder served through all of Obama's first term and the first half of his second; he announced on 25 September 2014 that he would step down from the post, although he remained on the job until April of 2015, when [Loretta Lynch](#) was confirmed as his replacement by the U.S. Senate.

Extra credit:

Eric Holder was the first African-American to serve as Attorney General. His successor, Loretta Lynch, became the first African-American woman to serve in the job... Eric Holder's wife, Dr. Sharon Malone, is an obstetrician. She graduated from Harvard (1981) and Columbia Medical School. They have three children: Maya, Brooke and Eric. Holder rarely speaks publicly about his children; a 1 March 2001 article in The Washington Post identified them as ages 7, 5 and 3, and Eric Holder's bio as a trustee of Georgetown Day School identifies his daughters as "Maya '11 and Brooke '14"... Eric Holder and Barack Obama both got undergraduate degrees from Columbia; Holder graduated 10 years before Obama... Eric Holder's father, Eric Sr., was a native of Barbados who emigrated to the U.S. as a boy.

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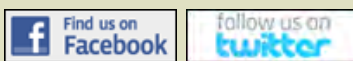
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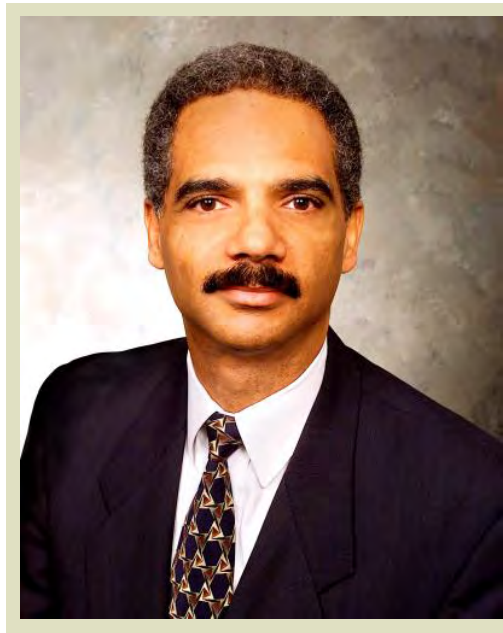


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■ Holder, Eric H. (1951-)



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Eric H. Holder, Jr., U.S.

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Attorney General since 2009, was born on January 21, 1951 in the Bronx, New York to parents of Barbadian descent, Eric, a real estate agent and Miriam Holder, a telephone operator. Holder was raised in East Elmhurst, Queens, a community which included a number of famous African Americans such as Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie, Harry Belafonte, and Sidney Poitier. Civil rights activist Malcolm X lived two blocks from young Holder and on one occasion in 1964, then recently crowned heavy weight champion Muhammad Ali entertained him and other community children



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on the steps of the Malcolm's house.

Holder graduated from Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan and in 1969, at the height of the Vietnam War protests and Black Power movement, he entered Columbia University where he participated in sit-ins by African American students. Holder also played collegiate basketball and became co-captain of his team. In 1973, he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in U.S. history from Columbia and then entered Columbia University Law School, earning a J.D. in 1976. While in law school Holder served as a law clerk for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Legal Defense and Educational Fund (NAACP-LDF).

In 1976, upon completing his law degree Holder joined the United States Department of Justice's newly established Public Integrity Section, prosecuting misconduct by government officials. While there he participated in the prosecution of South Carolina Democratic Congressman John Jenrette for bribery. During the 1970s, Holder also developed a professional relationship with other rising black Washington D.C. attorneys such as Valarie Jarrett, Alexis Herman, and Charles Ogletree.

In 1988, President Ronald Reagan named Holder an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia where he presided over civil and criminal trials. Holder resigned from his judgeship in 1993 to accept President Bill Clinton's appointment as U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, becoming the African American to occupy that position. As U.S. Attorney, he directed the federal government's case against Illinois Democratic Representative Dan Rostenkowski for his role in the Congressional Post Office Scandal. In 1997, Clinton nominated Holder to be Deputy Attorney General under Janet Reno. With subsequent Senate confirmation, Holder became the first African American to fill that position. Holder served briefly as Acting Attorney General under President George W. Bush until the confirmation of Attorney General-designee John Ashcroft.

Holder returned to private practice in 2001 and became a partner in the law firm of Covington & Burling in Washington, D.C. where he represented such high profile clients as the pharmaceutical corporation Merck and the National Football League. In 2007, he represented the NFL during its investigation of dog fighting allegations against the Atlanta Falcon's quarterback Michael Vick. In 2007, Holder joined Barack Obama's presidential campaign as a senior legal advisor and served on the 2008 vice presidential selection committee.

On December 1, 2008, President-Elect Obama nominated Holder to become the 82nd Attorney General and the first African American to hold that post. As attorney general, Holder supported LGBTQ rights and initiated a crusade against racial profiling. In a 2009 Black History Month speech, Holder argued that the United States was a "nation of cowards" regarding race relations. His comments generated a backlash from numerous political pundits.

In August 2014, Holder became controversial again when he ordered the Department of Justice to investigate events surrounding the death of unarmed black teenager Michael Brown at the hands of Ferguson, Missouri police officer, Darren Wilson. He ordered the DOJ to investigate possible civil rights violations related to the shooting and excessive force Ferguson police used against Brown supporters following the incident.

On September 25, 2014, President Obama accepted Holder's resignation as attorney general. Holder's career as a public servant spanned almost 40 years.

Holder is married to obstetrician Sharon Malone. They live in Washington, D.C. with their three children.

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THE 44TH  PRESIDENT

The New Team

President Obama has now filled nearly all of the major posts in his new administration. Below are profiles of some of the key members of his new team.

Major Positions

Assistant for Legislative Affairs [Phil Schilliro](#)
Attorney General [Eric H. Holder Jr.](#)
Central Intelligence Agency Director [Leon E. Panetta](#)
Chief of Staff [Rahm Emanuel](#)
Director of National Economic Council [Lawrence H. Summers](#)
Director of National Intelligence [Dennis C. Blair](#)
Environmental Protection Agency Administrator [Lisa P. Jackson](#)
National Security Adviser [James L. Jones](#)
Office of Management and Budget Director [Peter R. Orszag](#)
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Secretary of Commerce [Gary Locke](#)
Secretary of Defense [Robert M. Gates](#)
Secretary of Education [Arne Duncan](#)
Secretary of Energy [Steven Chu](#)
Secretary of Health and Human Services [Kathleen Sebelius](#)
Secretary of Homeland Security [Janet Napolitano](#)
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development [Shaun Donovan](#)
Secretary of Labor [Hilda L. Solis](#)
Secretary of State [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#)
Secretary of the Interior [Ken Salazar](#)
Secretary of Transportation [Ray LaHood](#)
Secretary of Treasury [Timothy F. Geithner](#)
Secretary of Veterans Affairs [Eric K. Shinseki](#)
United Nations Ambassador [Susan E. Rice](#)
United States Trade Representative [Ron Kirk](#)
White House Coordinator of Energy and Climate Policy [Carol M. Browner](#)
White House Press Secretary [Robert Gibbs](#)

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Eric H. Holder Jr.

Confirmation: Confirmed Feb. 2

Chosen for: Attorney general

Will bring to the job: A heavyweight résumé bursting with legal and law enforcement credentials. Mr. Holder has spent most of his career as a federal prosecutor, and his friends say his views on the law and the role of government align closely with Mr. Obama's.

Is linked to Mr. Obama by: Mutual friends and shared experiences, though Mr. Holder and Mr. Obama did not meet until 2004, when they were seated next to each other at a small dinner party in Washington. Mr. Holder has said he immediately “clicked” with Mr. Obama over the dinner, hosted by Ann Walker Marchant, niece of Vernon E. Jordan Jr., one of the city's superlawyers. Mr. Holder and Mr. Obama attended Columbia as undergraduates (although Mr. Holder, at 57, is 10 years older than the president-elect). Each had an immigrant father (Mr. Holder's parents are from Barbados). Another connection: Mr. Holder is close to Valerie Jarrett, an Obama confidant and co-chairwoman of the Obama transition team. During the campaign, Mr. Holder was part of a vice-presidential advisory team that helped pick Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr. of Delaware as Mr. Obama's running mate.

In his own words: “Loyalty is something I value an awful lot. And so my decision to support Barack was not necessarily a difficult one, but I had to be really moved by him. My inclination would be support Senator Clinton, but I was overwhelmed by Barack.” (From a recent profile in American Lawyer magazine.)

Used to work as: Deputy attorney general under Janet Reno in the Clinton administration. Had been United States attorney for the District of Columbia; a federal judge on the superior court bench in Washington; and a prosecutor in the Justice Department's public integrity section, which investigates political corruption. In recent years, Mr. Holder has worked as a partner at Covington & Burling, representing big-name clients like the National Football League, Chiquita Brands International and Merck.

Carries as baggage: His role in President Bill Clinton's controversial pardon of Marc Rich, the fugitive

financier, who in 1983 fled to Switzerland rather than face tax evasion charges. The pardon bypassed the usual Justice Department process, and so Mr. Holder, as deputy attorney general, had no direct role in it. But when queried about his view of the pardon, Mr. Holder told the White House he was “neutral, leaning towards favorable.” The comment was later seized on by Democrats to defend the pardon and by Republicans to blast Mr. Holder for endorsing the most heavily criticized pardon of Mr. Clinton’s presidency, in part because it turned out that Mr. Rich’s former wife, Denise Rich, donated large amounts of money to Mr. Clinton’s presidential library.

Résumé includes: Born Jan. 21, 1951, in the Bronx and raised in New York City ... attended public schools and graduated from Stuyvesant High School ... graduated from Columbia University and Columbia Law School ... married to Sharon Malone, an obstetrician in Washington ... the couple has three children.



Leslie E. Kossoff/Associated Press

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U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder Is Stepping Down After Six-Year Tenure

SEPTEMBER 25, 2014 AT 6:18 PM ET BY [DAVID HUDSON](#)



Summary: President Obama announces that Eric Holder will be stepping down from his current position as U.S. Attorney General. Assuming office in February 2009, Holder's nearly six-year tenure makes him one of the longest-serving Attorney Generals in U.S. history.



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In remarks from the White House State Dining Room this afternoon, [President Obama announced](#) that Eric Holder will be stepping down from his current position as U.S. Attorney General.

Assuming office in February 2009, Holder's nearly six-year tenure makes him one of the longest-serving Attorney Generals in U.S. history. He will continue to serve as Attorney General until the President nominates his successor, and the successor is confirmed by the Senate.

As the President noted, Holder's career in public service "began nearly 40 years ago as a young prosecutor in the Department that he now runs." Over his career, Holder has served at the Department of Justice under six U.S. presidents -- including serving as acting Attorney General at the beginning of President George W. Bush's first term.



Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr., delivers remarks following President Barack Obama's statement announcing Holder's departure, in the State Dining Room of the White House, Sept. 25, 2014. Attorney General Holder will remain at the Department of Justice until his post is filled. (Official White House Photo by Chuck Kennedy)

"As younger men, Eric and I both studied law," President Obama said. "And I chose him to serve as Attorney General because he believes, as I do, that justice is not just an abstract theory. It's a living and breathing principle."

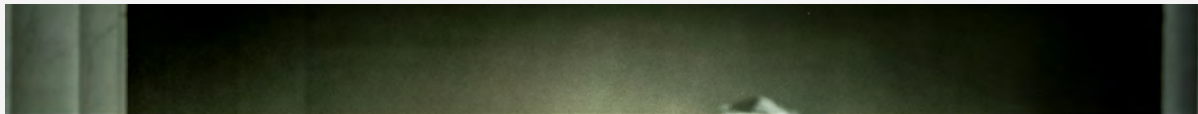
It's about how our laws interact with our daily lives. It's about whether we

can make an honest living, whether we can provide for our families; whether we feel safe in our own communities and welcomed in our own country; whether the words that the Founders set to paper 238 years ago apply to every single one of us and not just some.

That's why I made him America's lawyer, the people's lawyer.

"I chose him to serve as Attorney General because he believes, as I do, that justice is not just an abstract theory. It's a living and breathing principle."

-- President Barack Obama



Attorney General Eric Holder speaks at the National Action to Realize the Dream March, August 24, 2013. (Justice Department photo by Lonnie Tague)

President Obama went on to detail the portfolio that Holder assumed as Attorney General -- from counterterrorism to civil rights, and from public corruption to white-collar crime -- emphasizing the "superb job" that Holder has done:

He's worked side by side with our intelligence community and the Department of Homeland Security to keep us safe from terrorist attacks and to counter violent extremism. On his watch, federal courts have successfully prosecuted hundreds of terror cases, proving that the world's finest justice system is fully capable of delivering justice for the world's most-wanted terrorists.

He's rooted out corruption and fought violent crime. Under his watch, a few years ago, the FBI successfully carried out the largest mafia takedown in American history. He's worked closely with state and local law enforcement officers to make sure that they've got the resources to get the job done. And he's managed funds under the Recovery Act to make sure that when budgets took a hit, thousands of cops were able to stay on the beat nationwide.

He's helped safeguard our markets from manipulation, and consumers from financial fraud. Since 2009, the Justice Department has brought more than 60 cases against financial institutions, and won some of the largest settlements in history for practices related to the financial crisis, recovering \$85 billion -- much of it returned to ordinary Americans who were badly hurt.

He's worked passionately to make sure our criminal justice system remains the best in the world. He knows that too many outdated policies, no matter how well-intentioned, perpetuate a destructive cycle in too many communities. So Eric addressed unfair sentencing disparities, reworked mandatory minimums, and promoted alternatives to incarceration. And thanks to his efforts, since I took office, the overall crime rate and the overall incarceration rate have gone down by about 10 percent. That's the first time that they've declined together, at the same time, in more than 40 years.

The President noted that Holder's "proudest achievement," however, may be his efforts to reinvigorate and restore the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department -- through critical work on issues such as voting rights, immigration law, human trafficking, and same-sex marriage:

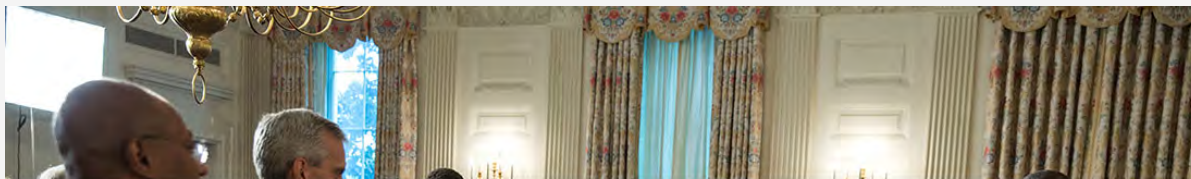
He has been relentless against attacks on the Voting Rights Act -- because

no citizen, including our servicemembers, should have to jump through hoops to exercise their most fundamental right. He's challenged discriminatory state immigration laws that not only risked harassment of citizens and legal immigrants, but actually made it harder for law enforcement to do its job.

Under his watch, the Department has brought a record number of prosecutions for human trafficking, and for hate crimes -- because no one in America should be afraid to walk down the street because of the color of their skin, the love in their heart, the faith they practice, or the disabilities that they live with.

He's dramatically advanced the cause of justice for Native Americans, working closely with their communities. And several years ago, he recommended that our government stop defending the Defense of Marriage Act -- a decision that was vindicated by the Supreme Court, and opened the door to federal recognition of same-sex marriage, and federal benefits for same-sex couples. It's a pretty good track record.

"Soon, Eric, [his wife] Sharon, and their kids will be a bit freer to pursue a little more happiness of their own," President Obama said. "And thanks to Eric's efforts, so will more Americans -- regardless of race or religion, gender or creed, sexual orientation or disability, who will receive fair and equal treatment under the law."



President Barack Obama joins a standing ovation for Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr., during statements regarding Holder's resignation in the State Dining Room of the White House, Sept. 25, 2014. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

Holder then came to the podium and spoke for a few minutes following the President's remarks, reflecting on his tenure and thanking a number of people -- including his wife and children; his late parents, Eric and Miriam Holder; and the President and other Administration officials -- for their support and friendship.

"Work remains to be done, but our list of accomplishments is real."

-- Attorney General Eric Holder

"I have loved the Department of Justice ever since as a young boy I watched Robert Kennedy prove during the Civil Rights Movement how the Department can and must always be a force for that which is right," Holder said. "I hope that I have done honor to the faith that you have placed in me, Mr. President, and to the legacy of all those who have served before me."

Attorney General Holder made clear that even after he steps down from his current

position, he won't leave the work:

In the months ahead, I will leave the Department of Justice, but I will never -- I will never -- leave the work. I will continue to serve and try to find ways to make our nation even more true to its founding ideals.

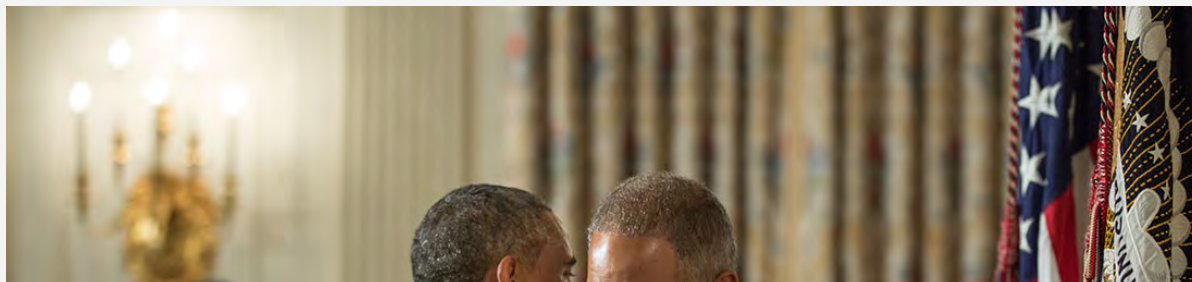
I want to thank the dedicated public servants who form the backbone of the United States Department of Justice for their tireless work over the past six years, for the efforts they will continue, and for the progress that they made and that will outlast us all.

And I want to thank you all for joining me on a journey that now moves in another direction, but that will always be guided by the pursuit of justice and aimed at the North Star.

"I will leave the Department of Justice, but I will never -- I will never -- leave the work."

-- Attorney General Eric Holder

[Read the President's and the Attorney General's full remarks here.](#)

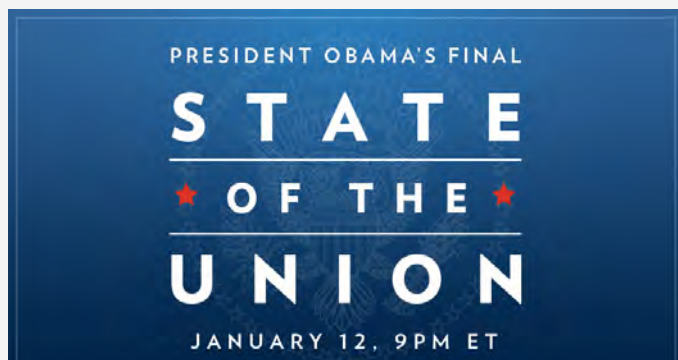


President Barack Obama hugs Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr., after statements announcing Holder's resignation, in the State Dining Room of the White House, Sept. 25, 2014. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

[David Hudson](#)

Former Associate Director of Content for the Office of Digital Strategy

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