

Questions for the Record
Hearing: Nominations
March 19, 2013
Submitted by Senator Amy Klobuchar

Karol Virginia Mason
Nominee, Assistant Attorney General (Office of Justice Programs)

Questions for Karol Mason:

1. Throughout your legal career you have had considerable experience in public finance. How will this experience help you maximize the cost effectiveness of grants administered by the Office of Justice Programs?

Response:

During my time in private practice, a majority of my practice involved building public and private partnerships. If I am confirmed to serve as the Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs, I plan to seek opportunities to partner with the other grant components, other agencies across the federal government, law enforcement, victims' advocates, the science community and other public and private partners to leverage the taxpayer dollars entrusted to the Office of Justice Programs.

2. If confirmed, what would be your primary goals as Assistant Attorney General?

Response:

If confirmed, my priorities will be to: 1) work collaboratively with the Office on Violence Against Women and the COPS Office to leverage the taxpayer dollars awarded to address criminal justice and juvenile justice issues; 2) continue the dissemination of best practices and solutions to criminal justice issues to communities across the country; and 3) identify proven strategies to address and prevent youth violence.

**Senator Chuck Grassley
Questions for the Record**

**Karol Virginia Mason
Nominee, Assistant Attorney General (Office of Justice Programs)**

1. I know that you are a close friend with very senior officials of the Obama administration. You were a major “bundler,” you were one of the nation’s top fundraisers for the Obama campaign, and served on his campaign’s National Finance Committee. At the time of your appointment as Deputy Associate Attorney General, you admitted your lack of litigation experience and reported that you would work with the Associate Attorney General – Mr. Perrelli – on “special projects.”

Would you please describe to the Committee your qualifications to be appointed to this important position? I am particularly interested in your experience to manage a large organization and its substantial budget.

Response:

As a Deputy Associate Attorney General at the U.S. Department of Justice from the end of April 2009 to the end of January 2012, I oversaw the Office of Justice Programs, the Office on Violence Against Women and the Community Oriented Policing Services Office (“COPS”, and collectively the “grant components”), Community Relations Services and the Tax Division. During my tenure at the Department of Justice, I demonstrated an ability to develop collaborations and partnerships across the Department of Justice, across the federal government and in the communities served by the Department of Justice. I believe that my role in overseeing the Department’s grant components will equip me to identify and implement opportunities to leverage the Department’s grant resources across the grant components.

During my tenure at the Department, I also worked closely with the Justice Management Division (JMD), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and each of the grant components on budget issues. I participated in discussions with the Associate, the budget staff at JMD, OMB and the leaders of each of the grant components in developing the budgets for the grant components and absorbing changes in the actual budgets adopted by Congress.

In private practice, I was a member of the law firm’s nine member management committee for four years, and its chair in my final year on the committee. The management committee has responsibility for all financial and human capital decisions of a firm of over 1,600 employees. I also served as Chair of the Audit and Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The University’s overall budget is approximately \$3 billion. The Audit and Finance Committee had responsibility for monitoring the University’s budget, addressing budget shortfalls and monitoring overall financial issues for the University.

2. Can you shed some further light on your decision to leave the Department of Justice last year? Why do you want to return after such a short absence?

Response:

Serving as the Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs would be a great honor and an opportunity to participate in improving our criminal justice and juvenile justice systems. If I am confirmed, I will retire from the law firm. When I left the Department in January 2012, I did not know that I would be offered this opportunity, and I am eager to return to public service.

3. As I understand, most of your professional career has been as a bond attorney. Given your lack of general litigation experience and your limited experience with criminal justice issues, how do you plan to bring yourself up to speed on the many law enforcement and criminal justice issues that the Office of Justice Programs is commissioned to handle?

Response:

If I am confirmed, I will build on the relationships that I developed during my time at the Department of Justice. I created a cross-Department initiative to address criminal justice issues in New Orleans on a comprehensive basis, using resources across the Department of Justice. This team was comprised of representatives from each of the Department's grant components, the Civil Rights Division, the U.S. Attorney's Office, the FBI, DEA and Community Relations Services. The New Orleans model I established serves as the model for other cross-Department initiatives.

I led the Attorney General's initiative to address children exposed to violence, known as Defending Childhood. I led the identification and implementation of six demonstration sites, two of which are in Indian Country. I was also the driving force behind the creation of the Attorney General's Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence, which was Co-Chaired by Joe Torre and Robert Listenbee. I remained involved in the work of the task force, through the release of their report in December 2012. I also brought the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education in as partners in this initiative.

I led the Department's consolidation of all Tribal grants under a single solicitation. In previous years, Tribes were required to respond to more than 20 separate grant solicitations. I also developed a partnership with the U.S. Attorneys in Indian Country and enlisted their participation as session leaders at the annual Tribal Youth Summits hosted by the Department.

I was the leader of the Memphis Team for the White House's Strong Cities, Strong Communities initiative. Our team brought together the Departments of Justice, Education, Health and Human Services, Labor, Transportation and Treasury to develop a plan for the federal government to help Memphis address labor preparedness and access, education and criminal justice issues.

I demonstrated an ability to create collaborations and partnerships across the Department of Justice and across the federal government. I believe that the time I spent in the leadership offices of the Department of Justice will enable me to identify opportunities for collaboration across the

Department. My role in overseeing all of the Department's grant components also equips me to implement stronger collaboration and efficiencies across the grant components. My work with the COPS office and the initiatives that I developed with the U.S. Attorneys' Offices will give me a foundation to help build relationships with the larger law enforcement community.

4. In an interview, you stated, "all I care about is helping the President be successful in implementing his policies and programs." While I am sure the President appreciates your loyalty, you are being considered for a position in a Department which must serve all Americans. Do you think you can be an independent voice and administer the programs and grants in a fair, accessible and transparent fashion?

Response:

Yes.

5. Are there any of the President's policies and programs that you would not support? If you had disagreement with an administration proposed policy or program, would you have the independence to express your opposition?

Response:

I can assure you that integrity is fundamental to how I live my life, and I make decisions based on what I think is the right thing to do. My practice is to determine the facts and gather the information necessary to make an informed decision based on the best information I can obtain.

6. You helped extensively with the Obama campaign and served on the campaign's Voter Protection Team in both 2008 and 2012. Do you believe that voter identification laws mitigating election fraud are intended to suppress the electoral base?

Response:

My involvement in voter protection was limited to making sure that on election day, voters in the states where I volunteered understood what was required to exercise their right to vote and that they complied with the law. I have no expertise with respect to voter identification laws, and at this time I do not anticipate having a role in voting matters if I am confirmed to serve as the Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs.

7. Last year, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that DOJ grant programs overlap and that this overlap contributes to the risk of unnecessarily duplicate grant awards for the same or similar purposes. Furthermore, the DOJ Inspector General's office continues to include DOJ's grants management among its list of top challenges affecting the department.
 - a. What actions did you take, while serving as Deputy Associate Attorney General to help eliminate this overlap and duplication?

Response:

During my time at the Department of Justice, I created a cross-component team including the Office of Justice Programs, the Office on Violence Against Women, the COPS Office and representatives of the Justice Management Division, which met bi-weekly, to identify opportunities to share best practices, streamline administrative functions, and develop common policies across the grant components. We also included the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in our meetings, in order to improve communication between the OIG and the grant components. The objective was to be proactive in identifying and addressing potential issues and to improve the grant components' responsiveness to issues raised by the OIG. As the OIG has noted, there are marked improvements in the grant components' responsiveness and implementation of practices proposed by the OIG as a result of this team's work.

- b. What specific steps do you plan to implement to address this problem within the Office of Justice Programs, if you are confirmed as an Assistant Attorney General?

Response:

If I am confirmed, I will continue to meet regularly with the leadership of OVW and COPS to identify ways that the grant components can work together to leverage the taxpayer dollars we are given to address criminal justice and juvenile justice issues.

8. The GAO report states that "OJP defines duplicative funding to include only instances where grantees are using federal money for the same exact item. In doing so, OJP excludes from its purview all federal funding that grant applicants have been awarded to carry out the same or similar activities within a proposed project. Thus, in making funding decisions without asking for information about and considering other sources of an applicant's federal funding to carry out the same or similar activities, OJP may be awarding funds for proposed projects that are already partially or fully funded. It may also be doing so at the expense of other applicants who, in the absence of other funding sources, may demonstrate to OJP greater financial need for their proposals."

- a. Please explain the extent to which you agree or disagree with this assessment.

Response:

I am not in the Department, and I am not in a position to address this question. If I am confirmed, I will encourage increased communication between the grant components so that opportunities to leverage taxpayer dollars are identified and the Department of Justice maximizes the number of grantees it serves.

- b. If confirmed, will you take a broader view of "duplication" to ensure that more grant applicants have a possibility of obtaining some federal funding?

Response:

If I am confirmed, I would work to make sure that the Office of Justice Programs communicates internally and with the other grant components to avoid unnecessary duplication and to leverage taxpayer dollars to maximize the number of grantees served by the Department.

9. DOJ grants management programs vary from office to office.

- a. As Deputy Associate Attorney General, with oversight for the grant making components of the Department, what steps did you take to consolidate, reform, or coordinate grant management programs such as GMS and CMS?

Response:

During my time at the Department of Justice, I created a cross-component team including the Office of Justice Programs, the Office on Violence Against Women, the COPS Office and representatives of the Justice Management Division, which met bi-weekly, to identify opportunities to share best practices, streamline administrative functions, and develop common policies across the grant components. We also included the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in our meetings, in order to improve communication between the OIG and the grant components. The objective was to be proactive in identifying and addressing potential issues and to improve the grant components' responsiveness to issues raised by the OIG. For example, this team developed a Department-wide process for dealing with high risk grantees across the three grant components. As the OIG has noted, there are marked improvements in the grant components' responsiveness and implementation of practices proposed by the OIG as a result of this team's work.

I also led the Department's consolidation of all Tribal grants under a single solicitation. In previous years, Tribes were required to respond to more than 20 separate grant solicitations.

One of my last tasks before leaving the Department of Justice in 2012 was to initiate a cross-grant component team to examine the best options for addressing the differing grants management systems at the Department.

- b. If confirmed, will you commit resources to unifying these systems?

Response:

If I am confirmed, one of my priorities will be to work with the leadership and staff of OVW and COPS to explore how to develop a grants management system that would address the needs of all of the grant components. The challenge will be how to accomplish this goal with the limited financial resources available.

10. A DOJ Inspector General audit of OJP's management of its Offender Reentry Initiatives in 2010 concluded that OJP did not establish an effective system for monitoring the SVORI and PRI grantees to assess whether they were meeting program goals. Their review of OJP's official SVORI grant files identified little to no documentation of grant monitoring activities. They found a reduced quality in the desk reviews prepared for the PRI grant program. Their

audit also identified significant design flaws in the initial implementation of OJP's SVORI and PRI reentry grant programs. In their report, they made 11 recommendations to assist OJP in designing and managing current and future reentry grant programs.

- a. What was your involvement with the audit or implementation of any recommendations?

Response:

I am not familiar with the specifics of this report or the specific recommendations contained in the report. I believe that this audit covered periods before 2009. Since 2009, the Office of Audit, Assessment and Management (OAAM) at the Office of Justice Programs has made substantial inroads in developing and implementing policies to address the concerns raised in reports issued by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) generally. During my time at the Department of Justice, I met regularly with OAAM, OVW, COPS, the Justice Management Division and the OIG to make sure that each of the grant components were implementing the recommendations from a report issued by the OIG specifically to improve grants management. We also developed a process for sharing results of OIG audits so that recommendations for improvement could be shared across the grant components.

- b. During your tenure as Deputy Associate Attorney General, what measurable improvements were made in recidivism rates in general, and Offender Reentry programs in particular?

Response:

I am no longer at the Department of Justice, so I do not have the information to respond to this question.

- c. If confirmed, to head OJP, what priority will you give this issue and what steps will you undertake to ensure recommendations are fully implemented?

Response:

If I am confirmed, I will work with OAAM and the OIG to make sure that the Office of Justice Programs continues to operate in a manner which is responsive to concerns raised by the OIG. I will meet regularly with OVW, COPS, JMD and the OIG to be sure that OJP maintains a track record of improving grants management.

11. I am concerned about conference costs and reporting requirements. Please explain what involvement you have had in this area in your previous DOJ position, and what you will do as head of OJP to minimize conference costs.

Response:

During my prior service at the Department, I convened a cross-grant component team, which also included representatives from the Justice Management Division, to discuss how the Department could improve its conference process to minimize costs and improve oversight. If I am confirmed, I will continue to look for ways to lower conference costs and to improve reporting and oversight.

12. If confirmed, what will be your priorities at the Department of Justice? What are the big issues you need to address at the Office of Justice Programs?

Response:

If confirmed, my priorities will be to: 1) work collaboratively with the Office on Violence Against Women and the COPS Office to leverage the taxpayer dollars awarded to address criminal justice and juvenile justice issues; 2) continue the dissemination of best practices and solutions to criminal justice issues to communities across the country; and 3) identify proven strategies to address and prevent youth violence.

13. What will be the most significant challenges you will face, if confirmed to this position, in addressing those priorities?

Response:

The biggest issue will be how best to fulfill the mission of the Office of Justice Programs at a time of shrinking federal resources.

14. In your opening statement at your hearing you stated that “education, health care, and programs to engage youth early are critical to creating an environment to break the cycle of crime.” Can you please identify what programs within the Office of Justice Programs address education and health care?

Response:

During my time at the Department of Justice, we worked closely with the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services to leverage resources to develop a comprehensive strategy to address certain criminal justice and juvenile justice issues, such as youth violence. The Attorney General’s Defending Childhood initiative is one example of this collaboration.

15. Please describe with particularity the process by which these questions were answered.

Response:

I reviewed your questions and prepared my responses. I had conversations with representatives at the Department of Justice who are familiar with this process, and I asked a friend to review my draft to identify grammatical errors. I sent my responses to the Department of Justice for submission to you.

16. Do these answers reflect your true and personal views?

Response:

Yes.