

Statement of

The Honorable Patrick Leahy

United States Senator
Vermont
February 12, 2009

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Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee,
Executive Business Meeting
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Today is the birthday of a great American. In about an hour, we will assemble in the Capitol rotunda to commemorate the 200th birthday of Abraham Lincoln. But that is not the birthday to which I refer. I begin today by asking you to join me in wishing our Ranking Republican, the senior Senator from Pennsylvania, a happy 79th birthday.

We need to accomplish our work expeditiously today. I have circulated a list of our proposed subcommittees for this Congress with their respective chairs and membership. I would like to adopt them today as an organizational matter.

I regret that our Senate and conference rules have prevented Senator Feinstein from retaining a gavel as a subcommittee chair on this Committee. She is an outstanding Member and has served as an excellent chair of the Terrorism Subcommittee. She is now the Chair of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, as well as the Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior and Related Agencies.

Senator Kohl will remain the chair of our Antitrust, Competition Policy and Consumer Rights Subcommittee. Senator Feingold will continue to chair our Constitution Subcommittee. I want to thank Senator Schumer for taking on the task of chairing our Immigration, Refugees and Border Security Subcommittee. That subcommittee has been chaired for the last 28 years by Senator Kennedy. Senator Durbin will be the new chair of our Crime and Drugs Subcommittee, succeeding Vice President Biden. Senator Cardin will be the new chair of our Terrorism and Homeland Security Subcommittee. And Senator Whitehouse will hold the gavel and chair our Administrative Oversight and the Courts Subcommittee. Each subcommittee has difficult issues and tremendous responsibilities.

I would like to make a brief comment about our Human Rights and the Law Subcommittee that we established two years ago, and that Senator Durbin did such an outstanding job chairing. With the change of administrations, and the transition to this new Congress, we are not continuing the subcommittee. No one should confuse that with a lack of commitment to the human rights agenda. We will remain active and attentive on these issues. I expect that we will hold hearings before the full Committee, that Senator Durbin will chair hearings on human rights issues before the Crime Subcommittee, and that Senator Cardin will do so before the Terrorism Subcommittee.

Over the last two weeks, we have seen the Senate confirm Eric Holder as the Attorney General of the United States, and this Committee has held hearings on President Obama's nominees to serve as the Deputy Attorney General, Associate Attorney General and Solicitor General. I had hoped to include the nomination of David Ogden to be the Deputy Attorney General on the agenda today. Unfortunately some Senators did not get their follow up questions to him by Monday at noon, as I had requested. I trust that when I do list him for consideration at our next meeting on February 26, two weeks from now, all Senators will be prepared to debate and vote on the nomination. That will be more than three weeks after his confirmation hearing. Any Senator could seek further delay, but I hope that no one will. The problems and threats confronting the country are too serious to delay. The Attorney General needs the other members of his Justice Department leadership team in place at the earliest opportunity.

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