

Nomination of Loretta E. Lynch to be Attorney General of the United States
Questions for the Record
Submitted February 9, 2015

QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR DURBIN

1. John R. Justice Student Loan Program

The Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Assistance operates an important program called the John R. Justice (JRJ) program, which provides student loan repayment assistance to state and local prosecutors and public defenders across the nation.

Congress enacted the JRJ program in 2008, modeling it after the Attorney Student Loan Repayment Program that the Department of Justice operates for its own attorneys. The JRJ program helps state and local prosecutors and public defenders pay down their student loans in exchange for a three-year obligation to continue serving in their positions. This has proven to be an effective recruitment and retention tool for prosecutor and defender offices. And since the Department of Justice is awarding hundreds of millions of dollars in grants each year to state and local law enforcement, which generates higher numbers of arrests and criminal cases, it is critical that we help prosecutor and defender offices keep experienced attorneys on staff to handle these cases.

The JRJ program has helped thousands of prosecutors and defenders across the country. But for the program to remain successful, the Department of Justice must remain committed to this program and to carefully administering and overseeing it. **Will you commit to work with me to keep this program operating effectively during your tenure if you are confirmed?**

RESPONSE: If confirmed as Attorney General, I will work with you and other Members of Congress to ensure that all DOJ programs, including the John R. Justice (JRJ) Program, operate efficiently and effectively. The Department's Bureau of Justice Assistance, which administers JRJ, also will continue to work with Congress, as well as relevant outside groups, to act on recommendations for improving JRJ.

2. Hate Crimes Reporting

Last October marked the five-year anniversary of the passage of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009, which gives the FBI authority to investigate violent hate crimes when state law enforcement agencies are unable or unwilling to do so. As I said at the time of its enactment, this law is one of the most important civil rights laws of our time.

Despite this success, we have much more work to do. The FBI recently released its annual Hate Crimes Statistics report, which indicated that state and local law enforcement jurisdictions

reported 5,928 hate crimes in 2013. As significant as that number is, the Bureau of Justice Statistics has estimated that there are actually more than 250,000 hate crimes annually.

If confirmed, will you take steps to ensure that the FBI and the Department of Justice work together with state and local law enforcement and affected communities to improve hate crime reporting?

RESPONSE: No person should be a victim of violence because of intolerance and bigotry due to his or her race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability. Perpetrators of hate crimes must be prosecuted, and the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 strengthened the Department's ability to prosecute hate crimes. I understand that the Department has increased its outreach and training to law enforcement regarding identifying, investigating, and prosecuting hate crimes, and if confirmed as Attorney General, I look forward to strengthening these efforts.