

Statement of
The Honorable Herb Kohl

United States Senator
Wisconsin
April 14, 2010

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Judiciary Committee Hearing, Justice Department Oversight
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Attorney General Holder, it has been well over a year since you were confirmed, and this will be your third oversight hearing before this Committee. We welcome you and thank you for making yourself accessible so that we can engage in one of our most important responsibilities -- oversight of the Justice Department. It is a duty that we take seriously -- regardless of the party in the White House. Oversight should not be conducted for the sake of political gain, but it should be a meaningful discussion about the challenges facing the Justice Department and to provide a check on its actions and use of taxpayer dollars.

Over the past year, the Justice Department has done many good things that should be applauded. The Department has renewed its commitment to local law enforcement which has put more officers on the beat and made our neighborhoods safer, helping local communities attract business and economic development. It has stepped up enforcement on the Southwest border to turn the tide on the Mexican drug cartels that continue to funnel drugs and crime to cities throughout the country.

The Criminal Division has increased efforts to root out fraud operations that cost the federal government and Americans billions of dollars - from financial and mortgage fraud to health care and Medicare fraud. And, as our economy rebounds, the Antitrust Division's revitalized enforcement has fostered a competitive marketplace that encourages innovation and economic development while ensuring consumers have access to high quality goods at the best prices.

The Justice Department's tireless fight against terrorism has yielded numerous interrupted plots and arrests, valuable intelligence information, and successful prosecutions. We were reminded of our constant struggle against those who wish to do us harm on Christmas Day when brave passengers stopped a would-be terrorist from taking down a full airplane with a home-made bomb, and when the FBI intercepted a sophisticated plan to attack the New York subway system.

Yet, there have been legitimate concerns raised-- by Democrats and Republicans alike -- about this administration's approach to terrorist investigations, detention and prosecution. Among the many issues you will need to address today include the long-overdue need to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay, where to hold trials for the five 9/11 plotters, and the process we use to detain and interrogate foreign terrorists, such as the Christmas Day bomber, that are captured in the United States. Reasonable minds can differ on these issues, but we can all agree that the

decisions you make will have a long-lasting and far-reaching impact on our fight against terrorism and our ability to keep Americans safe.

The Justice Department is charged with important duties in many areas of the law. We thank you and the thousands of employees who dedicate themselves each and every day to the independent and impartial enforcement of the law.