

Chairman Jerry Moran Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related
Agencies

Hearing to Review the FY2019 Budget Request for the U.S. Department of Justice

April 25, 2018

(As prepared for delivery)

Good afternoon, I call this hearing to order. Mr. Attorney General, welcome to the Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Subcommittee hearing to examine the Department of Justice's Fiscal Year 2019 budget request. I am pleased to welcome you to this subcommittee. My colleagues and I very much look forward to hearing your testimony today. Your input is not only helpful but necessary as we review the President's spending priorities for the Justice Department.

While this hearing is about the Department's FY2019 budget request, I suspect you may hear about a number of issues unrelated to the Department's resource needs. My focus in this hearing is to better understand your top funding priorities and to emphasize those that are important to our nation.

The Department of Justice is responsible for and involved in many important national priorities. Arguably, its greatest responsibilities include keeping Americans safe, which carries new meaning given the growing national security threats of today, and upholding the rule of law. This requires that Congress adequately and appropriately fund our nation's law enforcement efforts, including counterterrorism and cybersecurity initiatives.

In Kansas, the Department successfully investigated and convicted individuals who conspired to bomb Somali immigrants in Garden City. The work done by the FBI, the Liberal Police Department, the Seward County Sheriff's Office, the Ford County Sheriff's Office, the Garden City Police Department, the Dodge City Police Department, the Finney County Sheriff's Office, the Kansas Highway Patrol, the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, and the United States Attorney's Office should be a model for federal and local partnerships. I trust the Department will seek to replicate the success of these entities with the funds in this request.

The President's FY2019 budget proposes \$28.4 billion for the Department of Justice. I should note, however, that like many agencies and departments, this budget request was created and produced before the recently enacted fiscal year 2018 bill was finalized and became law. For example, both the Fix NICS Act and the Stop School Violence Act authorize important safety initiatives, but were signed into law in the 2018 omnibus and after the Department's FY2019

budget submission. As a cosponsor of both pieces of legislation, I look forward to hearing the Department's plans to implement these important initiatives.

Furthermore, this administration has made it a priority to combat violent crime, which is reflected as one of the Department's highest priorities. Specifically, the administration seeks \$109.2 million to enhance ongoing efforts to reduce violent crime and combat transnational criminal organizations in its FY2019 budget request. For example, the Department requests increased funding to expand the Project Safe Neighborhood program. Project Safe Neighborhood's main focus is on the eradication of illegal firearms and violent gang activity. The program is designed to improve police and community relations, which is strongly supported by many from local law enforcement officials in Kansas. The subcommittee looks forward to hearing details about this program.

I also look forward to hearing about the impact of emerging technologies, such as those being utilized by the National Integrated Ballistics Information network, known as NIBIN. NIBIN allows law enforcement officials to share ballistics intelligence across the United States, making law enforcement resources more efficient and effective.

The Department and administration has also prioritized solving the problem of illegal immigration. The FY2019 request seeks \$65.9 million in immigration-related program enhancements to support border security and enforcement efforts. For example, the 2019 request outlines that this funding would hire 150 attorneys for the Executive Office for Immigration Review, which oversees our nation's immigration courts and the Board of Immigration Appeals, and provide \$25 million for technology improvements to transform EOIR's current paper operating system to an electronic filing.

The Department is also involved in helping to combat the ongoing opioid epidemic. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, opioid overdoses in the U.S. have surpassed motor vehicle accidents as the number one cause of accidental death in the country. Each day, 115 individuals die from opioid-related causes. This crisis needs to be aggressively addressed and I look forward to working with the Department to ensure adequate resources are provided to do just that.

Lastly, I want to thank you, Attorney General, for your attention and acknowledgement of the letter that Senator Shaheen and I sent you exactly one week ago regarding the Executive Office of Immigration Review's (EOIR) Legal Orientation and Immigration Helpdesk programs.

Thank you for your important testimony today as our subcommittee begins its work on the fiscal year 2019 budget for the Department of Justice.

Senator Shaheen.

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