



Department of Justice

STATEMENT OF

MERRICK B. GARLAND
ATTORNEY GENERAL

BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AT A HEARING ENTITLED

“OVERSIGHT OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE”

PRESENTED
SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

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Good morning, Chairman Jordan, Ranking Member Nadler, and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the priorities and work of the Justice Department.

Two hundred and thirty-four years ago this week, Congress passed the Judiciary Act of 1789, which, among other things, established the Office of the Attorney General. In a letter President George Washington sent to Edmund J. Randolph expressing his intent to nominate Randolph as the nation’s first Attorney General, he wrote: “[T]he due administration of justice is the firmest pillar of good government.” A little over eight decades later, in June of 1870, Congress passed the Act to Establish the Department of Justice. One hundred and fifty-three years after its creation by Congress, the Justice Department’s founding purpose continues to guide our mission to uphold the rule of law, keep our country safe, and protect civil rights. I am proud of the work that the 115,000 employees of the Justice Department have done to advance each of those priorities since I last appeared before you. What follows are updates on that work, as well as specific examples that reflect the approach we are taking to fulfill our responsibilities to the American people.

I. UPHOLDING THE RULE OF LAW

A. Adhering to and Strengthening the Department's Norms

When I began my tenure as Attorney General, I said it would be my mission to reaffirm the norms that have guided the Justice Department's work for over 40 years. Since then, the Justice Department has reinforced and, where appropriate, updated and strengthened policies that are foundational for longstanding Departmental norms. Those policies are intended to protect the independence of the Department from partisan influence in law enforcement investigations; to strictly regulate communications with the White House; to establish guidelines for Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) investigations and for the use of compulsory process in investigations that could involve members of the press; to ensure respect for the professionalism of the Department's lawyers, agents, and staff; and to set out principles to guide the exercise of prosecutorial discretion.

For example, at the beginning of my tenure, we strengthened our policy governing communications between the Justice Department and the White House, and the White House did the same. That policy is designed to protect the Department's criminal and civil law enforcement decisions and its legal judgments from even the appearance of political or other inappropriate influences. We also issued a new policy to better protect the freedom and independence of the press. A free press is vital to the functioning of a democratic system under the rule of law. The policy we adopted restricts the use of compulsory process to obtain information from, or records of, members of the news media. The Justice Department strongly values a free press, and we are committed to protecting the First Amendment and the journalists who rely on it to keep the American people apprised of the workings of their government.

B. Protecting Our Country's Democratic Institutions

Upholding the rule of law includes protecting our country's democratic institutions. The Justice Department's investigation into the January 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol is one of the largest and most expansive investigations in our history. So far, that investigation has resulted in the arrest of more than 1,100 defendants for their alleged roles in the attack. We have secured convictions for a wide range of criminal conduct on January 6, as well as in the days and weeks leading up to the attack. Our work is not over. I have great confidence in the investigators and prosecutors who are undertaking these cases. They are doing exactly what they are expected to do: making careful determinations about the facts and the applicable law in each individual case. The Justice Department is committed to ensuring accountability for those criminally responsible for the January 6 assault on our democracy. And we remain committed to doing everything in our power to prevent this from ever happening again.

C. Protecting Those Who Serve the Public

We have all seen that Americans who serve and interact with the public at every level—many of whom make our democracy function—have been unlawfully targeted with threats of violence and actual violence. Judges, prosecutors, U.S. Senators and Representatives, school personnel, police officers, federal law enforcement agents, election officials and election workers, journalists, flight crew members, and local elected officials have all been threatened or attacked. That is dangerous for people’s safety. And it is deeply dangerous for our democracy. In 2022, the Department charged more defendants in criminal threat cases than in any year in at least the last five. Those have included investigations and prosecutions of individuals for making terrifying threats of violence to members of Congress.

In October 2022, the Department secured the guilty plea of an individual for threatening to kill a member of Congress. In December 2022, the Department charged and arrested an individual for allegedly repeatedly making calls to U.S. Senators and Representatives in which he left voicemails threatening bodily harm. Earlier this year, the Department secured the guilty plea of an individual for making interstate threats to a member of Congress. More recently, in April 2023, a defendant was sentenced in the District of Maryland after pleading guilty to threatening to murder a member of Congress. Also in April 2023, the Department charged an individual for threatening to kill a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. In July 2023, an individual was sentenced in the Northern District of New York after pleading guilty to mailing threat letters to a federal judge and two members of Congress. And in August 2023, the Department secured the guilty plea of an individual who had threatened to shoot or bomb several government officials and their families, including three governors and a U.S. Senator. The Justice Department will continue to investigate violence and illegal threats of violence, disrupt that violence before it occurs, and hold perpetrators accountable.

D. Defending the Rule of Law and Ensuring Accountability for War Crimes

The Justice Department’s work to ensure accountability for Russia’s unprovoked and unjust full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022 has focused on several lines of effort. In March 2022, the Department launched Task Force KleptoCapture (TFKC) to further leverage the Department’s tools and authorities to combat efforts to evade or undermine U.S. sanctions. TFKC has already taken several actions to freeze and seize the assets of sanctioned Russian oligarchs and indict individuals for violations of U.S. sanctions and for evasions of export controls. The enactment of the Additional Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2023 authorized the Department to transfer certain forfeited property to the Department of State to remediate the harms of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. In February 2023, I authorized the first-ever transfer under this new authority. The Department has initiated other forfeiture actions that, if ultimately successful, would make additional assets available to assist in rebuilding Ukraine. However, the transfer authority granted to the Department by Congress does not cover the full scope of the TFKC’s work. In particular, it does not cover assets forfeited in connection with the 2014 sanctions imposed in response to Russia’s earlier invasion of Ukraine, and it does not cover assets forfeited pursuant to violations of the Export Control Reform Act of 2018 or the Export Administration Regulations. The Department would welcome an opportunity to discuss with the

Committee the benefits of expanding the list of offenses and applicable executive orders that allow for transfer of forfeited assets for Ukraine’s benefit.

Last year, the Department also launched the War Crimes Accountability Team to centralize and strengthen the Department’s ongoing work to hold accountable those who have committed war crimes and other atrocities in Ukraine. The War Crimes Accountability Team leads investigations over which the United States has jurisdiction, partners with Ukraine on supporting their investigations, and works closely with other international partners on ensuring accountability wherever perpetrators are located. The Department and our partners stand with the people of Ukraine and will pursue every avenue of accountability to bring to justice those responsible. The enactment of the Justice for Victims of War Crimes Act gave the Department the authority to prosecute war criminals present in the United States regardless of where the offense occurs. We urge Congress to pass crimes against humanity criminal legislation, which would give U.S. prosecutors—like many of our international partners—jurisdiction to pursue perpetrators of those heinous crimes, including those committed by offenders who are subsequently present in the U.S. who could not otherwise be prosecuted under United States law.

The Department is deeply appreciative of the work of its attorneys and of Congress for their continued dedication to this cause. We will continue to use all the Department’s authorities to hold Russia and its proxies accountable for the atrocities they have committed during their illegal invasion of Ukraine, and to pursue Russian oligarchs and others who seek to evade U.S. sanctions.

II. KEEPING OUR COUNTRY SAFE

A. Countering Foreign and Domestic Terrorism

The Justice Department has no higher priority than keeping our country safe from all threats, foreign and domestic. That includes countering new and emerging terrorism threats, and doing so in a manner that is consistent with our Constitution and the rule of law. Our whole-of-Department commitment to countering terrorism includes our 94 U.S. Attorneys’ Offices; our law enforcement components, including the FBI; our grant-making offices; and our litigating divisions, including the National Security Division, the Civil Rights Division, and the Criminal Division. The Department also works with foreign partners to build their capacity to identify and address terrorism threats before they reach our shores.

We remain vigilant in the face of the threats posed by foreign terrorist organizations. This fall will mark six years since the terrorist attack in New York City that killed eight victims and injured many more on a bike path in lower Manhattan. Earlier this year, the defendant was convicted of all 28 counts in the indictment and received a life sentence. And in July 2022 and July 2023, the Department announced court-imposed sentences of life imprisonment for members of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), a designated foreign terrorist organization, following convictions for conspiring to provide material support resulting in death.

Our FBI field offices and U.S. Attorneys’ Offices also remain vigilant in countering the threat of domestic terrorism. The FBI has enhanced training provided to our state, local, Tribal, and territorial partners, while the Department’s Civil Rights and National Security Divisions are

working together more closely than ever. In March 2023, the Department announced that a U.S. Army soldier was sentenced to 45 years in prison following his conviction for attempting to murder U.S. servicemembers, providing and attempting to provide material support to terrorists, and illegally transmitting national defense information. And in April 2023, the Department announced court-imposed sentences for two defendants who were convicted of conspiring to provide material support to terrorists for plotting an armed attack on power grids.

In all our efforts, the Justice Department is guided by our commitment to protecting civil liberties. The Department has been clear that expressing a political belief or ideology is protected by the First Amendment. But illegally threatening to harm or kill another person is not. We will use every appropriate tool at our disposal to deter and disrupt such illegal acts and to hold accountable perpetrators of those crimes.

B. Protecting National Security and Countering Cyber Threats and Crime

The Justice Department is committed to investigating, prosecuting, and otherwise disrupting threats to America's national and economic security. We will continue to work with our international partners and other federal law enforcement agencies to address these threats. With respect to nation-state threats, the governments of the People's Republic of China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea are becoming more aggressive and more capable in their malign activity than ever before.

Last year, the Department announced its broader strategy for countering nation-state threats. That strategy focuses on the areas where the Department's authorities can have the most impact in combating the greatest threats to our national security, including those in the context of transnational repression, foreign malign influence, cyber, espionage, and theft of technology and intellectual property.

As part of our efforts to counter nation-state threats, in July 2023, the Department announced that a Russian citizen with alleged ties to Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) was arrested in Estonia and extradited to the United States to face charges for his involvement in a conspiracy to illegally obtain and provide sensitive, American-made electronics and ammunition in furtherance of Russia's war efforts and weapons development. In June 2023, the Department announced the conviction of three defendants on charges of stalking Chinese nationals in the United States and acting as illegal agents of the People's Republic of China as part of a global and extralegal repatriation effort known as "Operation Fox Hunt." Earlier this spring, the Department arrested two defendants in New York on charges of operating an illegal overseas police station in the United States on behalf of the Chinese government. And in August of last year, the Department announced charges in connection with an Iranian national's plot to murder a former U.S. National Security Advisor. The Department has also since indicted leaders of criminal plots operating from Iran who targeted a human rights activist in the United States who had publicized the Iranian government's human rights abuses.

In recent years, malicious cybercrime—from both nation-states and cybercriminals—has posed an increasing and constantly evolving threat. To continue to meet this threat, we have launched a new section in the National Security Division to expand our efforts beyond arrests

and prosecutions to include disruptive actions earlier in our investigations against the individual actors and key nodes in the cybercrime ecosystem that enable those individuals. In just one example of the approach the Department is taking to disrupt cyber threats, in January of 2023, we dismantled an international ransomware network responsible for extorting and attempting to extort hundreds of millions of dollars from victims in the United States and around the world. Known as the “Hive” ransomware group, this network targeted more than 1,500 victims since June of 2021 and targeted critical infrastructure and some of our nation’s most important industries. Before seizing two back-end computer servers used by the Hive network earlier this year, the FBI provided assistance to over 300 victims around the world, helping to prevent approximately \$130 million in ransom payments.

In addition, the Justice Department strongly supports reauthorizing Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) to ensure that our efforts to keep our country safe from cyber, nation-state, terrorist, and other threats remain informed by the most valuable and timely intelligence. Section 702 is an indispensable tool for protecting American national security by permitting the U.S. government to collect foreign intelligence information about non-U.S. persons reasonably believed to be outside the United States.

C. Combating Violent Crime and Gun Violence, Supporting State and Local Law Enforcement, and Building Public Trust

(1) Combating Violent Crime and Gun Violence

In 2021, I issued a Department-wide strategy to leverage the resources of our federal prosecutors, agents, investigators, criminal justice experts, and grant programs to combat the violent crime spike that began in 2020. Since then, every one of our U.S. Attorneys’ Offices across the country has worked alongside our state and local partners to implement district-specific violent crime reduction strategies. Each of our law enforcement components—the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS)—has worked with its state, local, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement partners to seize illegal guns and deadly drugs and to prosecute those who commit acts of violence in our communities. In 2023 alone, we have already prosecuted more than 9,500 individuals for violent crimes.

We have also accelerated our efforts to fight gun violence on every front—from cracking down on criminal gun-trafficking pipelines, to updating regulations, to deepening our partnerships with state and local law enforcement. Today, ATF is working more closely than ever with our state and local partners to turn the evidence they collect at crime scenes into concrete leads. ATF has generated nearly 200,000 leads on violent criminals just since summer 2022. As we build on this work, we are putting important new tools to use thanks to the enactment of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) last year. Those include expanded background check requirements for juvenile criminal history and relevant mental health records before a firearm is sold to anyone under 21. Thanks to those requirements, more than 300 firearms have been kept out of the hands of young people who should not have access to them. These tools also include BSCA’s new proscriptions against illegal firearms trafficking and straw

purchasing. Our prosecutors have already charged more than 170 defendants under the Act’s gun trafficking provisions and seized hundreds of firearms in connection with those cases. That work will continue.

We also continue to support community-led efforts that are vital to preventing violence before it occurs. At the end of Fiscal Year 2022, the Department—through our Office of Justice Programs (OJP)—announced \$100 million in community violence intervention (CVI) grants to help communities across the United States. In February, the Department hosted the first-ever Community Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative Grantee Convening, which saw more than 400 participants—representing the Department’s CVI grantees, local law enforcement officials, and community partners—come together in St. Louis. Earlier this year, the Department also announced the investment of over \$238 million for the Department’s Byrne State Crisis Intervention Program, which will allow communities to implement programs that work to keep guns out of the hands of those who pose a threat to themselves or others.

The Department’s Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) also plays an important role in preventing and reducing violent crime. OVW administers more than 20 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) programs and \$700 million in funding to support effective strategies for reducing domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. OVW is now implementing the many important updates to VAWA made by Congress in last year’s reauthorization. For example, just last week, on the 29th anniversary of the original enactment of VAWA, the Department announced \$192.8 million in grants designed to enhance services and justice solutions for victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. In February 2023, OVW released grant solicitations to help Tribes across the country, including in Alaska, implement special Tribal criminal jurisdiction.

(2) Supporting State and Local Law Enforcement

The Justice Department recognizes that our state, local, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement partners are on the front lines of keeping our communities safe. We are committed to doing everything in our power to provide our local law enforcement partners with the resources they need and deserve.

In October 2022, the Department announced more than \$370 million in grants—awarded by OJP—to fund state, local, and Tribal crime and violence reduction efforts and evidence-based strategies that support law enforcement operations; improve officer safety, health, and wellness; and build trust with communities. And, through our Violence Against Law Enforcement Officers and Ensuring Officer Resilience and Survivability (VALOR) officer safety and wellness initiative, we continue to provide trainings, research, and guidance on preventing violence against law enforcement and supporting officer wellness. The Justice Department, in consultation with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is also drafting guidance on best practices for addressing officer wellness and suicide prevention, which includes support for officers experiencing substance use challenges and mental health conditions or trauma from their duties. We have met with over fifty stakeholder groups, and we have heard them underscore what we know to be true—that addressing and providing tools for officer wellness is critical to

agencies' ability to recruit and retain high-quality candidates who reflect the communities they serve.

We are also committed to addressing challenges in officer recruitment and retention. Both OJP and our Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) are continuing to work on a number of programs and initiatives focused on supporting, recruiting, and retaining officers. Last year, we awarded more than \$139 million in funding for the COPS Hiring Program to enable law enforcement agencies across the country to hire additional full-time law enforcement professionals. In the coming year, we will award even more, with over \$224 million dedicated to the COPS Hiring Program.

(3) Building Public Trust

Public trust is essential to public safety. The Justice Department is committed to fostering trust and legitimacy between law enforcement and the communities we serve. Toward that end, in May 2022, the Department updated its own use-of-force policy for the first time since 2004, instituting important changes, including an affirmative duty for officers to prevent or stop any officer from engaging in excessive force or any other use of force that violates the Constitution, federal laws, or Department policies on the reasonable use of force. And in June 2021, the Department's federal law enforcement components were instructed to develop plans specific to their unique missions to expand the use of body-worn cameras. In September 2021, the Department issued the first-ever Department-wide directive limiting the use of "chokeholds" and "no-knock" warrants. The Department has also launched other key initiatives designed to support best practices and advance constitutional policing in America. For example, in March 2022, the Department launched a new Collaborative Reform Initiative, which offers multiple levels of support for law enforcement agencies seeking assistance.

In addition, as required by Executive Order 14074, we are working to establish a National Law Enforcement Accountability Database, a centralized repository of information documenting instances of law enforcement officer misconduct and decertification, as well as commendations and awards. The Department created first-of-their-kind accreditation standards to help further encourage state, local, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement agencies to adopt policies consistent with those highlighted in the Executive Order. The Department also released a Strategic Plan for supporting the goals of the Federal Interagency Alternatives and Reentry Committee, which was established by Executive Order 14074; safely reducing criminal justice system interactions; supporting rehabilitation during incarceration; and facilitating reentry for individuals with criminal records.

Last year, I appointed Colette Peters to serve as Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). Under her leadership, the BOP is working to ensure the rehabilitation, health, and safety of incarcerated individuals; a safe and secure work environment for correctional professionals; and transparency and accountability across federal detention facilities. In addition, during her tenure, Director Peters has continued to implement the First Step Act, and participation in First Step Act programming has continued to expand. Director Peters is leading the BOP through agency-wide reform, with an emphasis on accountability, integrity, respect, compassion, and correctional excellence.

D. Disrupting Drug Trafficking Networks and Preventing Overdose Deaths

The Justice Department is working tirelessly to get deadly fentanyl out of our communities and to dismantle and hold accountable the violent cartels that put it there. In 2022, the DEA and its law enforcement partners seized more than 58 million fentanyl-laced, fake prescription pills. That is more than double the amount seized in 2021. The DEA has also seized more than 13,000 pounds of fentanyl powder. Together, these seizures represent nearly 400 million potentially deadly doses of fentanyl. We are also working closely with our international counterparts—particularly in Mexico and Canada—to prioritize areas for enhanced coordination on disrupting the global production, transfer, and supply of fentanyl, including through increased information sharing and strengthened law enforcement counterparts.

As just one example of the comprehensive approach we are taking to disrupt fentanyl trafficking, in April 2023, I announced several significant actions the Justice Department had taken against the Sinaloa Cartel. This included charges against the cartel’s leaders, its chemical suppliers, manufacturers, gun and drug traffickers, and money launderers. On that same day, the Treasury Department announced sanctions against two Chinese companies and five related individuals for their roles in the sale of fentanyl precursor chemicals from China to the Sinaloa Cartel. Four of those individuals are defendants in the Department’s case. And in June 2023, I announced charges against eight Chinese nationals and four China-based companies that allegedly trafficked precursor chemicals from China to manufacture fentanyl. As alleged in the indictment, just one of those companies shipped over 200 kilograms of precursor chemicals—enough to make 50 kilograms of fentanyl. That much fentanyl could kill 25 million Americans.

The Department supports efforts in Congress to permanently schedule certain fentanyl-related substances as Schedule I drugs under the Controlled Substances Act to ensure the effective law enforcement and prosecution of the sale and use of these substances.

We are also taking action to hold accountable corporate entities that exacerbated the opioid crisis by violating the law. We are pursuing litigation against three corporations that we allege distributed or dispensed prescription opioids without the oversight that the Controlled Substances Act and its implementing regulations require. The Department calls upon responsible companies—whether pharmacies, chemical companies, drug manufacturers and distributors, or online marketplaces—to join us in our fight to overcome this deadly public safety and public health crisis.

In addition to our enforcement efforts, we are committed to helping communities meet the public health challenges of substance use. Last year, OJP announced grant awards totaling more than \$340 million to address the overdose epidemic and the needs of individuals experiencing substance use challenges. Those awards will support treatment courts; residential treatment programs; prevention and harm reduction services; evidence-based treatment, including medication-assisted treatment and recovery support services; services for opioid-affected youth; and building connections between carceral settings and community-based settings and services that improve continuity of care and reduce recidivism.

E. Protecting Americans from Economic Harm

(1) Combating Fraud and Abuse

The Justice Department remains committed to using every available federal tool—including criminal, civil, and administrative actions—to safeguard the integrity of taxpayer-funded programs. In this area, the Department is prioritizing the investigation and prosecution of health care fraud, including schemes that involve patient harm; schemes that impact older adults and vulnerable populations; COVID-19 pandemic fraud cases; telemedicine and genetic testing fraud schemes; crimes committed by major health care providers that operate in multiple jurisdictions; newly emerging schemes targeting Medicare Parts C and D; opioid diversion and distribution schemes, which can result in overdoses or new patients becoming addicted to controlled substances; and fraud arising from addiction treatment facilities and sober homes.

I established an inter-agency task force to combat pandemic fraud in May 2021, and between that time and the end of 2022, the Justice Department seized over \$1.3 billion in relief funds that criminals stole and charged over 3,000 defendants with crimes that occurred in federal districts across the country since the start of the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic also underscored the problems presented by exploitative practices that target older Americans. Between September 2021 and September 2022, the Department pursued approximately 300 criminal and civil cases involving more than 600 defendants to protect older adults from fraud and exploitation. And last October, I announced we were intensifying our efforts nationwide to protect older adults, including by more than tripling the number of U.S. Attorneys' Offices participating in our Transnational Elder Fraud Strike Force. Since the spring of 2022, the Consumer Protection Branch has also returned more than \$100 million to victims of elder fraud schemes as part of its cases against marketing companies that knowingly provided names of American seniors to those perpetrating elder fraud schemes.

(2) Combating Corporate Crime

The Department's top priority for corporate criminal enforcement is securing individual accountability by investigating and prosecuting those who profit from corporate malfeasance. The Department has fortified its corporate crime enforcement—first by convening an advisory group to understand how to deter crime, prevent recidivism, and protect victims, and then by issuing guidance aimed at accomplishing those goals. We have secured convictions of individuals as well as guilty pleas from corporations—both domestic and foreign—and have imposed independent corporate monitors where necessary to protect the American people and shareholders. The Justice Department will continue to pursue justice for the victims of these crimes, including workers, consumers, investors, and others, and we will hold accountable those who break the law.

(3) Vigorous Enforcement of the Antitrust and Consumer Protection Laws

The Justice Department is vigorously enforcing our antitrust laws. Our enforcement actions have resulted in the blocking or abandonment of numerous mergers that would have

further consolidated industries—from airlines to agriculture and from publishing to ocean shipping. They have led to significant restitution for workers harmed by wage-fixing. And we have reinvigorated criminal enforcement of the Sherman Act by bringing prosecutions for labor-market allocation, wage-fixing, and monopolization. We are also litigating against technology companies, airlines, and insurance companies whose conduct or proposed mergers suppress competition.

In July 2023, the Justice Department, together with the Federal Trade Commission, released a draft update of the Merger Guidelines, which explain the agencies’ approach to reviewing mergers and acquisitions for anticompetitive effects and compliance with federal law. The guidelines support vigorous enforcement consistent with the laws as written by Congress and interpreted by the Supreme Court, and better reflect how the agencies use modern analytical tools and deploy agency best practices in the context of our modern economy.

Beyond traditional antitrust enforcement, the Justice Department is committed to using criminal, civil, and administrative actions to protect consumers. The Department will work to ensure the safety of food, medicines, and consumer products and will safeguard consumer information from unlawful acquisition and use. Using the full array of our civil and criminal enforcement tools, we will hold accountable those who make fraudulent or misleading representations in the marketing of goods, especially where such conduct risks consumer harm.

The Justice Department strongly supports efforts by Congress—including the American Innovation and Choice Online Act—to promote competition in digital markets by passing legislation to prohibit certain anticompetitive practices by dominant online platforms. The Department also supports broader legislative efforts to provide the Department with the most effective tools to promote competition on an economy-wide basis.

III. PROTECTING CIVIL RIGHTS

A. Protecting Voting Rights

The Justice Department remains committed to vigorously protecting voting rights with the enforcement powers we have. The Department has increased the number of enforcement attorneys in the Civil Rights Division to scrutinize new laws that may deny or abridge the right to vote on account of race, color, or language status. The Department has filed lawsuits across the country to protect the right to vote. We have also filed statements of interest and amicus briefs in federal appeals and district courts across the country, as well as in the Supreme Court, to weigh in on critical questions.

Through this work, the Department has sought to address discriminatory voting laws, to protect language access at the ballot box, and to ensure that voters with disabilities are able to exercise the right to vote. And the Department has worked to provide guidance and outreach to state and local election officials and the public about federal voting rights laws. The Justice Department stands ready to work with Congress to provide all necessary support to develop and advance federal legislation to protect voting rights—including legislation that would restore critical tools to help protect the fundamental right to vote.

B. Combating Hate Crimes

The Justice Department is working tirelessly to investigate and combat hate crimes and hate incidents, which have significantly increased in recent years. The Department's work to combat hate crimes has led to the convictions of the three men who targeted and killed Ahmaud Arbery because he was a Black man jogging on a public street. It led to the conviction of an individual who, motivated by racist and xenophobic beliefs about the COVID-19 pandemic, targeted and attacked an Asian family at a supermarket in Midland, Texas. It led to the conviction of a man for a series of arsons targeting Catholic, Methodist, and Baptist churches. And in July 2022, it led to the indictment of a defendant for federal hate crime and firearms offenses following the horrific attack on the Black community in Buffalo, New York that killed 10 people and injured three others. In February 2023, the Justice Department secured a guilty plea from the individual who killed 23 people in a deadly, racist rampage in El Paso, Texas in 2019. And in June 2023, the Department secured the conviction of the individual who killed 11 congregants at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in a horrific antisemitic attack. The Department also is pursuing those who commit acts of hate based on sexual orientation or gender identity. This includes securing a 45-year sentence against a Louisiana man who was convicted of kidnapping and attempting to murder a gay man as part of a hate crime scheme targeting users of a dating app for gay men.

The Department is also working to improve hate crime reporting, which will in turn promote more effective prevention and prosecution of these crimes. Last September, the Justice Department officially launched the United Against Hate community outreach program in U.S. Attorneys' Offices across the country. The program brings together community groups, federal hate crimes prosecutors, law enforcement at every level, and others to build trust and strengthen coordination to combat hate crimes and hate incidents by helping individuals learn to identify, report, and prevent hate crimes.

This fiscal year, the Department will award nearly \$30 million in grants to support state and local agencies in investigating and prosecuting hate crimes, in addition to grants to improve hate crime reporting and support non-profit and civil rights organizations with implementing community-based approaches to prevent hate crimes. This includes grants allocated under the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act to support law enforcement agencies' transition to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), which is now the data collection mechanism for the FBI's annual Uniform Crime Reporting Program.

C. Advancing Constitutional Policing

The Justice Department is committed to holding accountable those who violate the Constitution, and to safeguarding the civil rights of everyone in our country. Last year, the Department obtained convictions of four former Minneapolis police officers for their roles in the death of George Floyd. The Justice Department will continue to seek accountability for law enforcement officers whose actions—or failure to act—violate their constitutional duty to protect civil rights.

Congress gave the Justice Department the authority to conduct civil pattern-or-practice investigations, which look beyond individual incidents to assess systemic failures. Pursuant to the statute, the Department has initiated pattern-or-practice investigations into police departments to determine whether the departments engage in systemic violations of the Constitution or federal law.

Earlier this year, the Department released the results of its investigations into the Louisville Metro and Minneapolis Police Departments, finding that both agencies engage in patterns or practices of unlawful conduct, such as use of excessive force and racially discriminatory policing. The Department is working with these police departments, local officials, and the communities to identify and implement remedies to address these violations—including consent decrees—and doing so in a manner that is fair, transparent, and effective.

As a law enforcement agency, the Justice Department recognizes we cannot do our jobs effectively without the trust of the public we serve. We also know that the work of law enforcement professionals is essential. The work that police officers do on a daily basis is extremely difficult and often very dangerous, and their responsibilities are enormous. They are asked to keep their communities safe, to uphold the rule of law, and to ensure equal justice under law. We are committed to working with our partners in communities and police departments across the country to advance the accountability, transparency, and public trust that are essential to public safety.

D. Protecting Reproductive Rights

Over fifty years ago, the Supreme Court decided *Roe v. Wade*, holding that the right to an abortion was protected by the Constitution. In the decades that followed, the Court repeatedly recognized and reaffirmed that right. For nearly half a century, that right was an essential component of women's liberty in this country. But last summer, the Court overturned *Roe* and renounced this fundamental right. In doing so, it also upended the doctrine of *stare decisis*, a key pillar of the rule of law.

The Justice Department is committed to protecting and advancing reproductive freedom under law. In July 2022, the Department established the Reproductive Rights Task Force, formalizing the Department's ongoing work to protect reproductive freedom under federal law. The Reproductive Rights Task Force is monitoring state laws and enforcement actions that threaten to infringe on federal protections of reproductive rights, and identifying appropriate responses to those actions, including affirmative and defensive litigation where appropriate. The Department is also advising federal agencies on legal issues related to reproductive health and enforcing federal laws to protect those seeking and providing lawful reproductive health care. We are also continuing to offer technical assistance to Congress on federal constitutional questions related to reproductive health care. The Department strongly supports efforts by Congress to codify Americans' reproductive rights, which it retains the authority to do.

E. Advancing Environmental Justice and Tackling the Climate Crisis

Last year, the Justice Department announced the launch of a Department-wide comprehensive environmental justice strategy and created the Department's first Office of Environmental Justice. The Department has made important strides in advancing that strategy and prioritizing the cases that have the greatest impact on the communities most overburdened by environmental harm.

For example, in February 2023, the Department brought suit to curb harmful air pollution from a petrochemical manufacturer, Denka Performance Elastomer, LLC, in Louisiana's infamous "Cancer Alley." In May 2023, the Department partnered with the Office for Civil Rights of the Department of Health and Human Services to secure a settlement agreement that puts the State of Alabama's Department of Public Health on a path to long overdue reform as the state now takes steps necessary to provide access to basic sanitation services, end exposure to raw sewage, and improve health outcomes for the predominantly Black communities of Lowndes County. This was the Department's first-ever environmental justice action under Title VI. And in June of this year, the Department secured a settlement that commits the City of Houston, Texas, to taking critical action to address illegal dumping that has long plagued and disproportionately burdened the predominantly Black and Latino residents of Houston's Trinity/Houston Gardens Super Neighborhood 48 and other similar communities in the city. Prior to this, in November 2022, the Department filed a complaint against the City of Jackson, Mississippi. Following an agreement between the Department, the City of Jackson, and the State of Mississippi, the court entered a stipulated order to stabilize the water system and build confidence in the system's ability to supply safe drinking water to the system's customers. The United States, the State, and the City recently brokered an agreement to bring the City's wastewater system under a similar order.

As part of a whole-of-government approach to combating the climate crisis, the Department continues to defend greenhouse gas regulation and agency actions in support of the shift to clean energy. And the Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division continues to bring affirmative cases centered on the reduction of greenhouse gases and protecting natural resources in the United States and around the globe, including combating illegal logging and protecting Tribal hunting, gathering, and water rights.

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All the work I have just described is only possible because of the courage, dedication, and integrity of the professionals who make up the Justice Department's work force. Every day, they do difficult and demanding work on behalf of the American people. I am grateful to them. And I could not be prouder to work with them.

All of us at the Justice Department recognize the trust that the American people have placed in us to do this work. We are honored to do it, and we are eager to continue our efforts to uphold the rule of law, keep our country safe, and protect civil rights. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.