

Remarks on the Nomination of Loretta E. Lynch To Be Attorney General and an Exchange With Reporters November 8, 2014

The President. Good morning. As President, I rely on my Cabinet every day to make sure that we are not just getting the job done, but we're making progress for the American people. And in a country that is built on the rule of law, there are few offices more important than that of Attorney General.

The Attorney General is the people's lawyer. As our Nation's chief law enforcement officer, the person in this position is responsible for enforcing our Federal laws, including protecting our civil rights. Working with the remarkable men and women of the Justice Department, the Attorney General oversees the vast portfolio of cases, including counterterrorism and voting rights, public corruption and white-collar crime, judicial recommendations and policy reviews, all of which impact on the lives of every American and shape the life of our Nation.

As I said back in September when he decided to step down, I am enormously grateful to Eric Holder for his outstanding service in this position. He is one of the longest serving Attorney Generals in American history, and one of our finest. Eric brought to this job a belief that justice isn't just an abstract theory, but a living, breathing principle. It's about how laws interact with the daily lives of our people: whether we can make an honest living, whether we can provide for our families, whether we feel safe in our own communities and welcome in our own country, whether the words that the Founders set to paper 238 years ago apply to every one of us in our time.

So thanks to Eric, our Nation is safer and freer, and more Americans—regardless of race or religion or gender or creed or sexual orientation or disability—receive fair and equal treatment under the law. I couldn't be prouder of Eric. And I couldn't be prouder that today I can announce somebody who shares that fierce commitment to equal justice under the law as my nominee for the next Attorney General, U.S. Attorney Loretta Lynch. *[Applause]* Hey!

I also, by the way, want to thank the Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Patrick Leahy, for being here on a Saturday to show his support. So—*[applause]*.

It's pretty hard to be more qualified for this job than Loretta. *[Laughter]* Throughout her 30-year career, she has distinguished herself as tough, as fair, an independent lawyer who has twice headed one of the most prominent U.S. attorney's offices in the country. She has spent years in the trenches as a prosecutor, aggressively fighting terrorism, financial fraud, cyber-crime, all while vigorously defending civil rights.

A graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School, Loretta rose from Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Eastern District of New York to Chief of the Long Island Office, Chief Assistant U.S. Attorney, and U.S. Attorney. She successfully prosecuted the terrorists who plotted the bomb—plotted to bomb the Federal Reserve Bank and the New York City subway. She has boldly gone after public corruption, bringing charges against public officials in both parties. She's helped secure billions in settlements from some of the world's biggest banks accused of fraud and jailed some of New York's most violent and notorious mobsters and gang members.

One of her proudest achievements was the civil rights prosecution of the officers involved in the brutal assault of the Haitian immigrant Abner Louima. Loretta might be the only lawyer in America who battles mobsters and drug lords and terrorists and still has the reputation for being a charming people person. *[Laughter]*

That's probably because Loretta doesn't look to make headlines, she looks to make a difference. She's not about splash, she is about substance. I could not be more confident that Loretta will bring her signature intelligence and passion and commitment to our key priorities, including important reforms in our criminal justice system.

She has consistently proven her leadership and earned the trust and respect of those she serves. Since 2010, she has been a member of the Committee of the U.S. attorneys across the Nation who advise the Attorney General on matters of policy, and she has served as Chair of that Committee since 2013. So it's no wonder that the Senate unanimously confirmed her to be the head of the U.S. Attorney's Office in two separate situations: once under President Clinton and once under my administration. And it's my hope that the Senate will confirm her a third time without delay.

At every stage in her career, Loretta has followed the principles of fairness, equality, and justice that she absorbed as a young girl. She was born in Greensboro, North Carolina, the year before Black students there sat down at a Whites-only lunch counter, helping to spark a movement that would change the course of this country.

The daughter of a school librarian and a fourth-generation Baptist minister—which meant that she knew when to be quiet—[laughter]—that's a little intimidating, being the daughter of a librarian and a minister. [Laughter] But Loretta rode on her father's shoulders to his church, where students would meet to organize antisegregation boycotts. She was inspired by stories about her grandfather, a sharecropper in the 1930s, who helped folks in his community who got in trouble with the law and had no recourse under the Jim Crow system. I know that if he were here today, he would be just as proud of her as I'm sure her husband Stephen is. I want to thank Stephen, Loretta's stepson Ryan, her stepdaughter Kia, and her other family members who came here today. We appreciate you guys agreeing to share her with the American people a little bit longer.

Loretta has spent her life fighting for fair and equal justice that is the foundation of our democracy. I can think of no better public servant to be our next Attorney General. Let me introduce to you Ms. Loretta Lynch.

Attorney General-designate Lynch. Thank you, everyone. And thank you, first of all, Mr. President, for that kind introduction. But most

importantly, thank you also for your faith in me in asking me to succeed an Attorney General whom I admire and to lead the Department that I love.

Now, no one gets to this place, this room, this podium, this moment by themselves. I also must thank Attorney General Eric Holder for your support and your friendship over the years, as well as by leading by example and always, always pushing this Department to live up to its name. And I want to thank Chairman Leahy, senior officials of the Department of Justice, and members of the Cabinet for being here today.

To my colleagues in the U.S. attorney community and throughout the Department, on whose strength and wisdom I lean every day, thank all of you, as well, for your support both now and in all the work that we have ahead.

And to my beloved office, the Eastern District of New York, my professional home: You have twice now given me the privilege of being able to serve you and to focus on nothing—nothing—but the protection of the American people. It has been a joy, it has been an honor, and I will carry you with me wherever I go.

And of course, to my wonderful family, several of whom are here with me today, all of whom are always with me in love and support, most especially my parents—who could not be here today, but are watching—whose every thought and sacrifice has always been for their children. They have supported me in all of my endeavors as I strive to live up to their example of service.

The Department of Justice is the only Cabinet Department named for an ideal. And this is actually appropriate, because our work is both aspirational and grounded in gritty reality. It's both ennobling, and it's both profoundly challenging.

Today I stand before you so thrilled and frankly so humbled to have the opportunity to lead this group of wonderful people who work all day and well into the night to make that ideal a manifest reality, all as part of their steadfast protection of the citizens of this country.

Mr. President, thank you again for the faith that you've placed in me. I pledge today to you

and to the American people that if I have the honor of being confirmed by the Senate, I will wake up every morning with the protection of the American people my first thought. And I will work every day to safeguard our citizens, our liberties, our rights, and this great Nation which have given so much to me and my family.

I thank you again, Mr. President and Mr. Attorney General, and all of you, for being here.

Release of Kenneth Bae and Matthew T. Miller From Captivity in North Korea

Q. [Inaudible]—the release of Americans from North Korea today?

The President. Well, I think it's a wonderful day for them and their families. And obviously,

we're very grateful for their safe return. And I appreciate Director Clapper doing a great job on what was obviously a challenging mission. All right?

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:27 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Justin A. Volpe, Charles Schwarz, Thomas Bruder, and Thomas Wiese, former police officers, New York City Police Department, who were convicted in connection with the 1997 assault of Abner Louima; Lorine and Lorenzo Lynch, parents of Attorney General-designate Lynch; and Stephen Hargrove, husband of Attorney General-designate Lynch, and their children Ryan and Kia Hargrove.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo of Indonesia in Beijing, China
November 10, 2014

President Obama. Well, it is a pleasure to meet President Widodo. I want to congratulate him on an inspiring election. And as many of you know, I have a very close association with Indonesia, having spent a good deal of my childhood there.

I think that in watching President Widodo's election, it is once again an affirmation of the full transition that Indonesia has made to a thriving democracy and a model for the kind of tolerance and pluralism that we want to see all around the world.

I know that President Widodo has a very ambitious reform agenda, and my main message here today is that the United States wants to be a strong partner with Indonesia in helping achieve its goals.

As part of our comprehensive partnership, we've already worked on a wide range of issues—economic, development, security, people-to-people exchanges, environmental cooperation—and I look forward to discussing how we can build on that momentum, perhaps even with a visit by President Widodo in Washington next year.

I also want to thank Indonesia for the leadership regionally, as well as internationally,

that it has shown on a number of issues. As a leader in ASEAN, Indonesia has been a driving force around the work that we've done on disaster assistance, on education, on scientific and technical exchanges, as well as issues of maritime security. And both our countries agree that it's important for us to maintain international norms that ensure freedom of navigation and that all countries are treated fairly and equitably.

And finally, as one of the world's largest democracies and also as one of the world's largest Islamic populations, Indonesia has played an extraordinary role in promoting pluralism and respect for religious diversity. And I want to thank Indonesia in the work that it's done to isolate extremism and to work with other countries around counterterrorism efforts.

So, Mr. President, I very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you. I hope that we can develop not only a strong personal friendship, but can continue to build the strong friendship between our two peoples.

President Widodo. I would like to thank Your Excellency, and this will be the first time that I meet President Obama. And I would like