

LEGAL momentum

The Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund

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March 17, 2015

Senator Charles Grassley, Chair
Committee on the Judiciary
Dirksen Senate Office Building - Room 224
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Patrick Leahy, Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary - Room 224
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Letter in Support of Loretta Lynch, nominee for United States Attorney General

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Leahy:

On behalf of Legal Momentum, as well as the other groups whose names appear below, I write in support of the candidacy of Loretta Lynch for U.S. Attorney General. For 45 years, Legal Momentum has served as the voice for, and has worked to protect, women and girls. We work to transform our society into one where all women and girls are economically secure, empowered to make their own choices, and live and work free of discrimination and violence.

Ms. Lynch has had an illustrious career in law enforcement. As United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York (EDNY), Loretta Lynch made protecting the most vulnerable members of our society a hallmark of her tenure. Along these lines, she distinguished herself as a leader in fighting human trafficking which our government has rightly called, "modern day slavery". She has also worked tirelessly to protect child victims from exploitation by people they know and trust.

Loretta Lynch's Anti-trafficking Work:

Under Loretta Lynch's guidance, the United States Attorney's Office's anti-trafficking program indicted over 55 defendants in sex trafficking cases and rescued over 110 victims of sex trafficking, including over 20 minors. In addition, 18 children, many of whom were being held by sex traffickers in Mexico, have been reunited with their victim-mothers.



Notable human trafficking prosecutions won by EDNY under Lynch's leadership include:

- *United States v. Lopez-Perez et al.*: In February 2014, three brothers convicted of sex trafficking were sentenced to double-digit prison terms for running a trafficking ring that enticed victims, as young as 14 and 15 years old, to be transported illegally into the United States and forced to work as prostitutes in New York City and elsewhere. The defendants beat and sexually assaulted the victims to compel them to work and to punish them for not earning enough money, and forced them to turn over all of their earnings to the defendants. The defendants also threatened violence against the victims' family members to prevent the victims from running away.
- *United States v. Rivera, et al.*: Antonio Rivera, the owner of several New York bars, was sentenced to 60 years' imprisonment for his role in a sex trafficking and forced labor ring. Rivera's co-defendants, John Whaley and Jason Villaman, were sentenced to 25 and 30 years, respectively. Evidence at trial established that the defendants recruited and harbored in the United States scores of undocumented Latin American immigrants, and forced them to work as waitresses in Rivera's bars. Rivera and others used violence, including rapes and beatings, as well as fraud and threats of deportation, to compel the victims to work and prevent them from reporting the illegal activity to police.
- *United States v. Granados, et al.*: Seven members and associates of the Granados-Hernandez sex trafficking organization were convicted of trafficking and smuggling women and girls to the United States from Mexico for the purpose of prostitution. The four lead defendants, Eleuterio Granados-Hernandez, Samuel Granados-Hernandez and their cousins, Angel Cortez-Granados and Antonio Lira-Robles, were sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from 15 to 22 years. Six children were reunited with their mothers as a result of the investigation.
- *United States v. Johnson ("Dollar Bill")*: In August 2012, William Johnson (also known as "Dollar Bill") was sentenced to 17½ years in prison for sex-trafficking a minor. The defendant kept a 15-year-old girl in his home in St. Albans, Queens, prostituted her, and kept the prostitution earnings for himself. At sentencing, the government established that the 15-year-old victim was just one of several underage girls and women Johnson prostituted out of his Queens home.
- Under Loretta Lynch's leadership, the EDNY prosecuted one of the largest criminal alien employment investigations ever and secured the largest criminal immigration forfeiture in history. In that case, 7-Eleven store owners and their confederates ran what Loretta Lynch called "a modern day plantation system," exploiting their alien employees, stealing their wages, and requiring them to live in unregulated boarding houses. In September 2014, five of the defendants pleaded guilty to the charges.
- *United States v. Estrada-Tepal, et al.*: Three brothers are pending trial on charges of trafficking women from Mexico to the United States and causing them to engage in commercial sex acts through force, fraud and coercion. The defendants were arrested in January 2014.
- *United States v. Paul Rivera, et al. ("TF Mafia case")*: In this case, currently scheduled for trial in April 2015, the defendants are charged with racketeering conspiracy and racketeering, as well as a host of substantive crimes including murder, drug trafficking, money laundering and witness tampering, as well as sex trafficking. The crimes were allegedly committed in connection with a Brooklyn-based gang called TF Mafia.

Loretta Lynch's Work on behalf of Exploited Children:

In addition to combating trafficking under Loretta Lynch's leadership, the EDNY brought charges against criminals who subjected children to horrific abuse and exploitation. Recent examples include:

- *Prosecution of Child Exploitation:* In July 2014, an EDNY jury convicted Bebars Baslan of traveling and attempting to engage in sexual acts with a child under 12, and child pornography crimes. Baslan is scheduled to be sentenced in February 2015.
- *Prosecution of Pediatrician for Sexually Abusing Patients:* In April 2014, pediatrician Rakesh Punn pleaded guilty to sexually exploiting three of his patients under the guise of providing medical treatment. He faces a sentence of up to 30 years in prison.
- *Prosecution of Joseph Valerio:* Valerio, a real estate mogul from Smithtown, Long Island, was convicted on 15 counts of child exploitation relating to two victims. Valerio used email to communicate with a co-conspirator in Ukraine to arrange for images of a toddler to be produced for him and also produced images of a local New York victim. The court ordered the forfeiture of the defendant's home at the conclusion of the trial. He is awaiting sentencing.
- *U.S. v. Camille Solomon-Eaton:* The defendant was convicted at trial of thirteen counts for sexually exploiting her two-year-old daughter and soliciting the sexual exploitation of five other children. Solomon-Eaton took sexually explicit photos of her two-year-old daughter and texted them to a man that she had met in an online chat room. In October 2014, the defendant was sentenced to 17 years imprisonment.
- *Project Safe Childhood:* During Loretta Lynch's tenure, the dedicated prosecutors of EDNY have brought 173 prosecutions for child exploitation and child pornography in coordination with the Department's Project Safe Childhood.

Throughout her distinguished career, Loretta Lynch has sought to protect the most vulnerable and powerless members of our communities, showing herself to be a public servant in the true sense of the word. She has worked tirelessly to safeguard our communities, enforce federal laws and done so without fear or favor. We can think of no better candidate for the post of United States Attorney General.

Very truly yours,

Legal Momentum

National Organizations

Casa de Esperanza
Futures Without Violence
Jewish Labor Committee
Jewish Women International
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

National Council of Jewish Women
National Resource Domestic Violence Hotline
National Latin@ Network
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

State & Local Organizations

New York

Legal Information for Families Today (LIFT)
New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Girls For Gender Equity