

REMARKS
AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

OF

THE HONORABLE KAROL V. MASON
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

RIGHT TO COUNSEL NATIONAL CONSORTIUM
INAUGURAL MEETING

ON

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2015
WASHINGTON, DC

Good morning. My name is Karol Mason, and I'm the Assistant Attorney General here at the Office of Justice Programs. Before I introduce our luncheon speaker, I'd like to take a moment to welcome all of you to our building and to thank you for being part of this launch of the Right to Counsel National Consortium.

I'm excited about this group and what it proposes to accomplish in the months ahead. This is a terrific opportunity to build on the tremendous work being done by each and every one of you, and by our own colleagues here at the Department of Justice. I want to single out the dedicated leadership and staff of our Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Access to Justice Office. In particular, let me recognize Denise O'Donnell, BJA's Director, and Kim Ball, who leads BJA's right-to-counsel efforts.

The work that all of you are doing to protect the rights guaranteed by the sixth amendment is critical to President Obama's vision for criminal justice reform. The President understands that the integrity of the system depends on having a level playing field, which is possible only when defendants have access to competent legal representation. As Attorney General Lynch and her predecessor, Eric Holder, point out, we're not fighting to win cases, we're fighting to secure justice.

I'm proud of all that we're doing to achieve that goal, and I'm proud that we have leadership at the Department of Justice dedicated not only to making our communities safer, but to building a system that is fair, equitable, and accessible. These are the principles that will determine whether our justice system makes a difference in the lives of those it touches and whether it lives up to its potential as a force for good in our society.

We're fortunate to have one of those leaders as our luncheon speaker today. Vanita Gupta is my colleague in the Department's Civil Rights Division and one of the staunchest advocates for fairness and justice in America. She has made a career out of fighting for the rights of the marginalized and disadvantaged while at the same time supporting the men and women who enforce our laws, prosecute and defend our cases, and run our correctional facilities.

Over the last year, I've had the pleasure of working closely with her on our National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice. We've traveled the country together to promote stronger relationships between the justice system and the people it serves, and I continue to be inspired by her knowledge and passion.

I'm very glad to have her with us today. Please welcome Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General of the Civil Rights Division, Vanita Gupta.

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