



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ATTORNEYS GENERAL

in

The Great Hall

OCTOBER 8th, 1998

2:00 P.M.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION AWARDS CEREMONY

HON. JANET RENO, UNITED STATES ATTORNEY GENERAL

P R O C E E D I N G S

(Introduction.)

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you very much. It is a great honor to be here today to present the John Doar Award.

So to everyone here, thank you for the great work that you do for this country.

I am very honored to begin by presenting the John Doar Award. This award is in honor of John Doar who joined the department and led the division during the implementation of many key civil rights laws including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

During these formative years of the Civil Rights Division, John Doar translated the ideal of legal equality and racial justice into a law enforcement program that set the standard for the division's rigorous enforcement of our nation's civil rights laws.

The John Doar Award was established to recognize career achievements in civil rights. The recipient must be a career division attorney who has served at least 10 years in the division and who has demonstrated high standards of excellence and dedication throughout their career.

The 1998 recipient of the John Doar Award is Phil Breen.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Phil joined the division in 1980 through the Attorney General's Honor Program after receiving a bachelor's degree from Yale University and a law degree from the Columbia University School of Law.

After a brief stint as staff attorney in the voting section, Phil was transferred to the coordination and review section. At that time, the coordination and review section had been given major new responsibilities under an Executive Order signed by President Carter, and a section was being revitalized. Phil quickly established himself in the section and these are the words of people who know him well as an incredibly well-versed, hard-working attorney with a brilliant legal mind and an engaging personality. During his years in the section he quickly rose to the position of supervisory attorney and took on the section's most difficult problems.

Because of Phil's impressive analytical skills and his superb writing ability, he shouldered the most thorny issues the section faced on issues of legislation and administrative law.

He developed the position of how persons who are HIV positive are covered under Section 504. He worked with the civil division and the Education and Commerce departments and developed the government's legal position in the Gladd Case on the requirements of captioning of television programs that receive federal funds.

He developed the division's position in response to the Veldie Litigation, providing a shield from liability for federal civil

rights officers engaged in enforcing civil rights laws.

But perhaps nothing was more important in Phil's work during this era than his efforts in dealing with the Reagan Administration's Task Force on Regulatory Relief.

Phil's intellectual capabilities, his ability to work quickly, efficiently and accurately under extreme time pressures and his superb writing ability were used to combat the new administration's frontal attack on Section 504 and on the predecessor to the IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Through his efforts within the department and with OMB and his working in concert with the disabilities rights community, the administration backed off its staying to eliminate these disability rights laws and their implementing regulations.

When Congress began considering the passing -- the passage of a new comprehensive disability rights law, Phil was called into action. He worked tirelessly on the passage of the bill that would become the Americans with Disabilities Act, writing legal memoranda, policy statements and public positions for the White House and the Attorney General.

Once the law was enacted, he played a critical role in the development of the department's two major ADA implementing regulations.

He was single-handedly responsible for the development of the department's two ADA technical assistance manuals.

Because of his efforts federal courts have given deference to the legal positions expressed in the department's regulations and manuals; thus, his regulatory work has served as the basis for the division's court victories on several very difficult legal issues.

Now, as the Disability Rights Section Special Legal Counsel, Phil continues to play a key and decisive role in the development of ADA policy. He reviews all legal briefs and pleadings in the section to insure consistent and appropriate legal positions.

He works closely with the appellate section and the special

litigation section on the development of all ADA policies and their briefs.

Phil is continually sought after for his sage counsel and his guidance. He is a natural leader. He is kind and incredibly generous with his time with section staff. He willingly spends hours educating section staff on the ADA, constitutional law, and the appropriate positions to take in letters on the ADA information Line and in briefs.

Phil's expertise have been relied upon throughout the department including the Attorney General on numerous occasions.

In sum, Phil is respected throughout the federal government and in the civil rights community for his outstanding judgment, his incredibly broad knowledge, his intelligence and his commitment.

This level of excellence merits many times over recognition with the prestigious John Doar Award. It is with great pleasure that I present this award to Phil Breen.

(Applause.)

THE END.