



# Department of Justice

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**SWEARING-IN**

**CEREMONY**

**OF**

**THE HONORABLE GRIFFIN B. BELL  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES**

**11:15 A.M.**

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, 1977**

**THE GREAT HALL**

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

**WASHINGTON, D. C.**

MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, the Chief Justice of the United States. (Applause)

MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States. (Applause)

PRESIDENT CARTER: Thank you everybody. Thank you very much.

This is a great day in my own life, and I believe a great day in the life of our Nation. One of the most crucial appointments that a President can make is that of Attorney General. Because here we have not a Department of Law, but a Department of Justice. (Applause) To a maximum degree possible, the Attorney General should personify what the President of the United States is --attitudes, philosophies, commitments -- because here is an extension of the President's attempt to provide equality of opportunity and a sense of trust in the core of our American governmental institutions in Washington. About seven or eight years ago because of a chasm that developed between our own government and many of our people, the doors of this building next door had to be locked. I don't doubt the need for it at the time. But it was a symbolic separation of both disaffected people and disadvantaged people from the core of Justice. A few minutes ago, Griffin Bell opened those doors. (Applause)

And they are going to be kept open.

There may be times when we wish they were closed. And there may be times when I, as President, wish that I was not quite so accessible to the news media and to the people of our country. But that is part of the democratic process. And I want to be sure that everything that I do, everything Griffin Bell does, and everything all of you do, is conducive of a restoration of trust and harmony, the sharing of responsibility, and a sharing of opportunity in the greatest Nation of all.

I want to congratulate Griffin Bell on his fine vote yesterday. I noticed in my engineering computations that he got seventy-eight per cent of the votes in the Senate. I only got a little over fifty per cent as President. (Laughter) And I think this is a very good comparison between his experience and background and capability to perform this important job compared to my own. We have a lot to learn, and we will learn together. I think all of you know that I have implicit trust in Judge Griffin Bell. And his performance in office, working closely with me, with the Supreme Court, with the Congress, with those throughout our Nation responsible for the administration of justice will demonstrate again that what I said in Plains a month or two ago is true. That I have selected and the Senate has now confirmed a man who will not just be an adequate Attorney General, but who will be a great Attorney General. I have no doubt about that prediction coming true.

I want to say this in closing. Twenty-four years ago today Warren Burger was given an oath of office here as an Assistant to the Attorney General, and he has demonstrated through his own sense of fairness and his intelligence and his administrative capability and his justified reputation that he deserves to be a top legal officer in this country, and I am very grateful that our Chief Justice Warren Burger has come to administer the oath to our Attorney General. Mr. Chief Justice, I appreciate your presence, and it is an honor for us to be here with you. Thank you very much.

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: Mr. Bell, are you prepared to take the oath as Attorney General?

GRIFFIN BELL: I am.

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: Would you raise your right hand and repeat after me... I Griffin Bell, do solemnly swear . . .

GRIFFIN BELL: I Griffin Bell do solemnly swear . . .

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: . . . that I will support and defend . . .

GRIFFIN BELL: (repeats above)

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: . . . the Constitution of the United States . . .

GRIFFIN BELL: (repeats above)

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: . . . against all enemies, foreign and domestic . . .

GRIFFIN BELL: (repeats above)

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: . . .and I will bear true faith  
and allegiance to the same . . .

GRIFFIN BELL: (repeats above)

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: . . . that I take this obligation  
freely . . .

GRIFFIN BELL: (repeats above)

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: . . . without any mental reservation  
or purpose of evasion . . .

GRIFFIN BELL: (repeats above)

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: . . . and that I will well and  
faithfully discharge . . .

GRIFFIN BELL: (repeats above)

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: . . . the duties of the office  
on which I am about to enter . . .

GRIFFIN BELL: (repeats above)

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: . . . So help me God.

GRIFFIN BELL: (repeats above)

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: Congratulations. (Applause)

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Mr. President, Mr. Chief Justice,  
and many friends. I can't recognize everyone here, but I want  
to recognize Senator Eastland, the President Pro Tempore of the  
Senate, Senator Birch Bayh who is sitting up here. They were in  
the great fight that we had yesterday, and I have asked them  
especially to come and sit up here this morning because they helped  
me when I really needed help. (Laughter)

(Applause)

But they are not the only Senators here. There are others. I see Senator Kennedy, Senator Thurmond, a lot of other senators here. We invited the entire Senate, and I hope that the entire Senate came. We are also proud to have some of the Justices of the Supreme Court, in addition to the Chief Justice and Mrs. Burger I see there. Justice and Mrs. Blackmun, Justice Stevens, Justice and Mrs. Powell. I want you to all stand, please. (Applause)

Have I overlooked anyone from the Supreme Court?

(Laughter) That would be a very poor way to start out as Attorney General. (Laughter)

Now, there are a lot of other people here, and as I say, I can't introduce everyone.

During the long Senate hearings, there was a great deal said about one law firm and one Georgia citizen. Everybody talked about the Sibley Commission. Some people thought it was a terrible commission and some thought it was good. And I, myself, and the people in Georgia thought it was a very good commission and did fine work. It is a great pleasure now for me to ask the Chairman of that Commission -- he is 89 years old, and he came here today -- Mr. John H. Sibley. Mr. Sibley, won't you stand? (Applause)

There was a law firm that was mentioned a lot. And some people said it was called King and Spaulding and yesterday in the Senate, they said it was the Kirbo firm (applause), and then

they finally had it divided into two firms before the day was over. (Laughter) I want everyone from King and Spaulding to stand. (Applause) Did Bill Meador come?

Now, the senior senior of King and Spaulding, William King Meador, age 84. Won't you stand? (Applause)

There are just two or three other people that I feel I must mention -- Judge Tuttle and I served on the Court together for almost 15 years, and he is still on the Fifth Circuit. Judge Tuttle came, and I want him to stand up. Judge Elbert Tuttle. (Applause) And then I have many warm friends with the Atlanta newspapers. But I won't introduce everyone, but I do want to introduce Jack Tarver, the publisher of the Atlanta papers and the head of the Cox Newspapers, Jack Tarver. (Applause)

Jack and I have been friends a long time, and we have a mutual interest in a very small college in Georgia.

I thank all of you for coming. I look forward to seeing you upstairs on the fifth floor -- those of you who -- many of you who I have not seen this morning. I had to go to a meeting.

I want to close by telling you of one happening out in Aspen summer before last, and I think it tells a lot about the way we want our country to be and the way we want our government to operate. Justice and Mrs. Blackmun and Mary and I were there in Aspen with a group summer before last, and the Blackmuns are here and they will remember this story well. We were invited one evening over to a home where they had some

small children. There was a six-year-old boy there by the name of Matthew. Justice Blackmun sat down on a footstool and talked with Matthew for a little while and just had a visit with him. So that night, Matthew was going to bed, saying his prayers, and he said to his mother, "I met the nicest man tonight."

She said, "Who was he?"

He said, "I don't know his name; but I think he was the government."

Do you remember that?

I hope that is what people will say of us, that we are quiet, we are nice people, we do our work well, and we do represent the government in the best possible way.

Thank you very much for coming.

(Applause)