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UNITED STATES ATTORNEY DONALD W. WASHINGTON TO LEAVE OFFICE

Lafayette, La.: United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced today that he will relinquish his duties as the United States Attorney for the Western District of Louisiana effective January 18, 2010. Washington officially submitted his resignation in separate letters to President Barack Obama and United States Attorney General Eric Holder on January 6. "It has been a high honor and great privilege to serve as United States Attorney, and to work alongside so many talented and dedicated professionals in service to our country and the cause of justice," Washington stated.

Washington was appointed United States Attorney by President George W. Bush and took office in September 2001, just six days after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. During the following eight years as the chief federal law enforcement officer, he led an office of 75 Assistant United States Attorneys and support staff, along with many federal, state and local law enforcement agencies in an aggressive effort to combat terrorism, drug trafficking, violent crime, public corruption, health care fraud and the exploitation of children, and to pursue and collect monies owed to the government. Washington's office also defended the interests of the United States in civil lawsuits.

The first African American ever to serve as the United States Attorney for the Western District of Louisiana, Washington became a leader in enforcing federal laws, both criminal and civil, designed to guarantee the civil rights of all Americans. He directed criminal prosecutions against the unlawful intimidation of citizens through cross burnings and noose hangings, and supervised the eminent resolution of decade-old litigation aimed at ending racial discrimination in the school systems of Lafayette, St. Landry and Evangeline Parishes. Washington also attracted national attention during the September 2007 “March on Jena,” when more than 20,000 protesters from across the country traveled to Jena, Louisiana to call attention to the treatment of six high school students by the local criminal justice authorities. Through interviews with national and international news organizations, testimony before a congressional committee, and numerous town hall meetings with local audiences, Washington emerged as a calm and rational voice which sought to ease racial tensions while promoting respect for the rule of law and the dignity of all citizens.

Washington’s influence extended beyond the borders of western Louisiana. He served for four years as a member of the Attorney General’s Advisory Committee in Washington, D.C., a select group of United States Attorneys who assist the Attorney General in developing national policy for the Department of Justice. He also served two years as Chairman and lead United States Attorney over the Southeast Region Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force covering eight U.S. states in multiple judicial districts. During his tenure, the program developed consolidated target lists for the nine federal law enforcement agencies constituting the task force. Washington’s leadership led to the development of techniques to enhance the possibility of federal prosecution after law enforcement traffic stops that seized illegal drugs and drug money.

Washington was also asked by the Department of Justice to lead a Rule of Law Project in Kathmandu, Nepal, a joint Justice and State Department project designed to improve the justice sector

in south Asia. Washington traveled twice to Kathmandu, once to confer with government officials and to conduct training sessions for Nepali prosecutors, and a second time to assist with the development of the Judicial Academy of Nepal.

Washington also distinguished himself as an attorney in the courtroom. He personally served as co-counsel in several of the most important criminal and civil prosecutions ever undertaken by his office. In June 2008, a jury in Shreveport convicted Caddo Parish District Judge Michael Walker and Caddo Parish Juvenile Judge Vernon Claville of racketeering for accepting bribe payments from a bail bondsman. Later the same year, a jury in Lafayette convicted Dr. Mehmood Patel, a cardiologist, of health care fraud for performing and billing Medicare for unnecessary medical procedures causing the Western District of Louisiana to be the first in the nation in successfully prosecuting this type of case. In 2005, he directed the prosecution of Mohammad Farooq Qureshi, a Lafayette resident convicted and sentenced to four years in prison for making false statements to FBI agents in connection with other counter-terrorism investigations related to the U. S. Embassy bombings in Africa in 1998. In addition, Washington personally negotiated a \$49 million settlement from Shell Oil Company in 2003 for venting and flaring 1.5 billion cubic feet of natural gas from an offshore well without authorization from federal regulators, and without paying royalties owed to the United States on the gas. Washington also led the government's team of lawyers that secured \$3.8 million and \$1.9 million recoveries, respectively, from Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital and Lafayette General Medical Center for filing false Medicare claims.

Washington also played a key law enforcement and prosecutorial role for the Department of Justice in the historic aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

“From my childhood in rural east Texas, I was taught that being an American is one of the greatest blessings any human can receive. And with that privilege come the profound responsibilities

of duty, honor and country. Those ideals were further engrained in me at West Point and as an active duty military officer, and I have strived each day that I have had the honor of serving here to carry them forward and use them as a constant guiding beacon in the pursuit of justice. The remarkable accomplishments achieved here during the last eight years are attributable primarily to the tireless work of the devoted professionals in this office along with the many federal, state, and local law enforcement officers, who daily commit themselves and their efforts to the pursuit of justice and the advancement and protection of the interests of the United States. I leave this office with great confidence in the future knowing that the dedicated men and women in this office and throughout the United States Department of Justice will continue to steadfastly serve the cause of justice for as long as this great nation continues to deserve the blessings of liberty.”

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