

U.S. Attorney's Report to the District

A Government in Transition

In November, after a long campaign season, voters went to the polls and selected who would serve as our next President. Currently, our federal government's leadership and the transition team are planning for the transfer that will take place in January from one Administration to another, a process that has been repeated time and time again in our nation's history. That such transitions occur peacefully and in an orderly manner, even when control is passed from members of one political party to another, is a sign of the strength of American democracy and our Constitution.

November also marked a transition of sorts for my Office's leadership here in the Eastern District of California. When Ben Wagner stepped down as the presidentially-appointed U.S. Attorney at the end of April, I took over leadership of the Office as the Acting U.S. Attorney. Then, in November, the Attorney General appointed me to serve as the U.S. Attorney for the district until the President appoints a new one. Given past experience, it is difficult to predict when a new presidentially-appointed U.S. Attorney might be selected, vetted, and confirmed by the Senate. In the past, a committee of leaders in the local legal community has helped assess potential candidates for the position. Our district has been fortunate to have had a history of strong leaders being appointed as U.S. Attorney. In my time in this Office, I have worked under the leadership of two excellent presidentially-appointed U.S. Attorneys, McGregor Scott and Ben Wagner, who, although appointed by Presidents of different political parties, each brought great talent and energy to the position and served the district well for years. Whomever the next presidentially-appointed U.S. Attorney is, that person will benefit from the tremendous legacy left by Greg and Ben and those who came before them: three offices filled with hard-working, talented employees committed to pursuing justice.

With a new Administration, there will be a new Attorney General and new people who will fill the political leadership positions in the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C. A new Attorney General often sets new priorities and policies for the Department, which are communicated to and implemented by the U.S. Attorney's Offices around the country. New priorities and policies will impact the way we do our work, though much of what each U.S. Attorney's Office does will stay the same. By statute, we are tasked with prosecuting federal criminal cases, litigating civil cases on behalf of the United States, and collecting debts owed to the United States that are administratively uncollectible. In every administration, we will prosecute drug trafficking crimes, violent crimes, white collar crimes, and other federal criminal offenses; we will defend lawsuits against federal agencies and sue to recover for damages done to the United States; and we will litigate to recover debts owed to the federal government. We will continue to work closely with and support our law enforcement partners at the federal, state, and local levels, something that is critical in a district as geographically vast and diverse as ours, and we will continue to reach out to the various groups throughout our diverse community to ensure that we can be effective in keeping all of our district safe.

We will continue to do all of this in a non-partisan manner, because the Department's job is to exercise its authority in each case without regard to political affiliation. While the Department's leadership positions in Washington and each presidentially-appointed U.S. Attorney are political appointments, the Department of Justice and its U.S. Attorney's Offices are non-partisan entities whose public credibility rests on acting, and appearing to act, in a non-partisan manner. The thousands of career attorneys and other staff throughout the Department are civil servants, hired without respect to political party or views, who stay in the Department through the transition of Administrations. These men and women who work throughout the country as Assistant U.S. Attorneys, federal law enforcement agents, and support staff, are the Department's greatest strength, serving the public by advancing in a fair manner the Department's mission of serving justice.

This district is no exception. You and I are fortunate to have a stellar group of career attorneys and staff working in this Office. It is with great enthusiasm and humility that I look forward to leading this group of people in the coming months as the U.S. Attorney.

If you would like to communicate with our office, contact the main number in Sacramento, or submit a suggestion by clicking on the button below. Thank you.

United States Attorney

Phillip A. Talbert