



Department of Justice

**STATEMENT OF
THOMAS E. PEREZ
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION**

**BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**OVERSIGHT HEARING ON THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION**

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Statement of Assistant Attorney General Thomas E. Perez
Civil Rights Division
United States Department of Justice
Before the Subcommittee on the Constitution
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Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the work of the Civil Rights Division.

President Obama and Attorney General Holder have repeatedly made clear their commitment to civil rights enforcement. In recent remarks outlining his priorities for the Justice Department, the Attorney General committed to “protecting the most vulnerable among us, and those who cannot speak out or stand up for themselves.” The President and Attorney General have demonstrated their support for our work by providing resources to the Division – resources that have, over the last two years, allowed us to add a number of talented career professionals to our ranks and make great progress toward our goal of restoring and transforming the Civil Rights Division.

Our mission in the Civil Rights Division has three basic principles:

- We expand opportunity and access for all people – the opportunity to learn, the opportunity to earn, the opportunity to live where one chooses, the opportunity to move up the economic ladder, and the opportunity to realize one’s highest and best use.
- We ensure that the fundamental infrastructure of democracy is in place – by protecting the right to vote, and by ensuring that communities have effective and accountable policing.
- We protect the most vulnerable among us so that they can move out of the shadows and into the sunshine – by ensuring that they can live in their communities free from fear of exploitation, discrimination, and violence.

With these principles guiding our work, the Civil Rights Division in the last two years has ramped up enforcement of the nation’s civil rights laws, making significant strides in fulfilling its mission to protect the civil rights of all individuals. For example:

- In Fiscal Year 2009, we filed more criminal civil rights cases than ever before, and then exceeded that record in Fiscal Year 2010, filing 125 criminal cases.
- We have trained thousands of local law enforcement officials around the country on the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009, and recently secured the first guilty plea under the law.

- We conducted the most extensive review ever of a law enforcement agency, the New Orleans Police Department, and we are now working with city officials, the police department, and the community to develop a comprehensive blueprint for sustainable reform of the police department
- We reached the largest ever settlement under the Fair Housing Act to resolve claims of rental discrimination, as well as the largest monetary recovery for victims ever in a Fair Lending settlement.
- We reached the most comprehensive settlement ever in an *Olmstead* case with the State of Georgia to ensure that thousands of individuals with disabilities will receive services in their communities, rather than being segregated in institutions.
- We issued the most extensive overhaul of Americans with Disabilities Act regulations since the passage of the Act in 1990.
- We have greatly expanded efforts to protect members of the military, and their families, in voting, employment, and the consumer context.

The cornerstone of our efforts is our commitment to fair, vigorous, and evenhanded enforcement of all of the laws within our jurisdiction. The talented, dedicated career attorneys, professionals, and support staff who work in the Division are committed to this principle, and have been indispensable in our transformation and restoration over the last two years. Their efforts are critical to our ability to continue to protect the civil rights of all individuals.

Criminal Enforcement and Law Enforcement Misconduct

Hate Crimes

Regrettably, hate crimes remain all too prevalent in communities across our country. The Division continues its critical work to prosecute hate crimes, and we have worked hard to implement the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009. The Division has helped to plan or participated in dozens of training conferences throughout the country, working with local U.S. Attorney's Offices, the FBI, and the Department's Community Relations Service to bring together federal, state, and local law enforcement, along with community stakeholders, educating them about the law and its implementation.

More than 80 investigations have been opened under the new law and, just last month, the first defendants were convicted under the Act – one pled guilty and the other was convicted at trial by a federal jury – of charges related to a violent attack on five Latino men in which one of the victims sustained life-threatening injuries.

The Division also recently prevailed in a hate crime prosecution of two young men for fatally assaulting Luis Ramirez, a Latino man, because of his ethnicity, in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania. In February 23, the two were sentenced to 9 years in prison for the fatal beating of Mr. Ramirez. In addition, the former Shenandoah Police Chief and a Police Lieutenant were convicted of falsifying information related to the investigation of the fatal beating.

We also continue to prosecute violent acts of hate directed at individuals who are, or are perceived to be, Muslim or Arab. In February, in the 50th prosecution involving post-9/11 backlash violence, the Division secured a guilty plea in a case involving arson at the playground of an Arlington, Texas, mosque. Cases like this one remind us that the post-9/11 backlash continues, and that we must remain vigilant to protect all individuals from such acts of hate.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking – the equivalent of modern day slavery – is a hidden crime that victimizes the most vulnerable among us and, like drug trafficking or gun trafficking, also frequently involves complex international cartels.

The Civil Rights Division has pushed efforts to combat human trafficking to the highest levels ever, prosecuting a record number of trafficking cases in FY 2009, and then topping that record in FY 2010. These efforts have included cases of unprecedented scope and impact through which we obtained significant sentences of imprisonment. The Division filed 52 sex and labor trafficking cases in FY 2010, charging 99 defendants.

Among those cases was the largest human trafficking case in history, alleging that the defendants forced more than 400 Thai workers to labor on farms across the country. The charges arise from the defendants' alleged scheme to coerce the labor and services of Thai nationals to work on farms across the country under the U.S. federal agricultural guest worker program.

Law Enforcement Misconduct

Policing is difficult work, and police officers perform heroic services in protecting their communities. However, it is important to hold accountable those who abuse their authority, and the Criminal Section of the Division continues to manage a steady docket of cases involving police brutality and misconduct. This work has included a number of cases in New Orleans that occurred both before and after Hurricane Katrina.

For example, last July, the Division charged six New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) officers in connection with the police-involved shooting on the Danziger Bridge in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina that resulted in the death of two civilians and the wounding of four others. Five additional officers pled guilty to related charges. In December, a federal jury convicted three current and former NOPD officers in relation to the shooting death of Henry Glover, the subsequent burning of Glover's remains, and a related cover up.

Following the spate of criminal cases involving NOPD officers, the Division launched a civil pattern or practice investigation of the New Orleans Police Department. The investigation came at the request of New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu, and was the most extensive in the Division's history. In March, the Department issued an extensive report documenting a wide range of systemic and serious challenges. Our findings included a pattern or practice of unconstitutional conduct or violations of federal law in numerous areas of NOPD activities, including unconstitutional stops, searches, and arrests; use of excessive force; discriminatory policing; and others. The Division is now working closely with the City to develop a comprehensive blueprint for sustainable reform.

The NOPD investigation was just one of several that the Division has launched throughout the country. Most recently, we announced a comprehensive investigation of the Newark, New Jersey, Police Department to examine allegations of excessive force, unconstitutional stops, searches, arrests and seizures, discriminatory policing, and officer retaliation against people who observe and/or record police activity and conditions of confinement.

In each of these cases, we will continue to work with cities, police departments, and community stakeholders to ensure that communities have effective, accountable policing that reduces crime, upholds the law and the Constitution, and earns the respect of the public.

Equal Educational Opportunity

The Division continues its critical work to ensure that school districts are delivering on the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education* so that all students have equal access to a quality education.

For example, last year, the Division reached a settlement with a school district in Louisiana that had two high schools, one that was almost entirely segregated and one that was integrated. The high school that was nearly 100 percent African American was offering no Advanced Placement classes and only five gifted and honors classes, while the other, attended by nearly all of the district's white students, offered more than 70 Advanced Placement, gifted, and honors classes. Such differences deny students of color the educational opportunities to which they have a right, and we will continue to aggressively enforce the law to ensure that all students have access to a quality education.

Meanwhile, as we continue to read disturbing accounts of the ramifications of pervasive harassment of students, the Civil Rights Division has worked to promote the safety of students in their schools and to prevent harassment -- every child has the right to attend school without the fear or threat of violence.

For example, late last year, the Division entered into a comprehensive settlement agreement with the Philadelphia School District to resolve allegations that Asian-American students were subjected to severe and pervasive harassment because of their national origin, including one incident in which more than 30 students were attacked and 13 were sent to hospital emergency rooms. Also last year, the Division entered into a settlement agreement with a school district in New York involving the harassment of a gay teen who failed to conform to gender stereotypes. The lawsuit alleged that the school district failed to meet its obligation to address the harassment. The case marked the first time in nearly a decade that the Division was involved in a Title IX case involving sex-stereotyping discrimination.

In April, the Division and the Department of Education (ED) jointly settled a case against a school district in Minnesota for failing to take steps to combat peer harassment against Somali-American students. In late 2009, complaints were filed with the Division and ED after a fight broke out involving nearly a dozen high school students. We found that the district meted out disproportionate discipline for the students involved in the incident, and that the district's policies, procedures, and trainings were not adequately addressing harassment against Somali-American students.

In addition, the Division continues to work to protect the rights of English Language Learners (ELL) to receive the services they need to ensure their full participation in school. For example, last October, the Division and ED entered into an agreement with the Boston Public Schools that will result in the delivery of services to more than 4,000 underserved eligible students and to thousands of additional students identified as possible ELL students but who were never appropriately tested.

Disability Rights

Among the Division's top priorities is protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities. Last year marked the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, a groundbreaking law that has not only dramatically increased access to all aspects of civic, economic and social life for individuals with disabilities, but has forever changed the way our society thinks about people with disabilities. The Justice Department marked the anniversary by publishing its comprehensive final revised regulations for Titles II and III of the ADA, as well as the ADA Standards for Accessible Design. The Standards include new provisions that expand access to recreation facilities, judicial facilities, and a variety of other areas. The revised rules were the Department's first major revision of its guidance on accessibility in 20 years.

Meanwhile, the Division has launched an aggressive effort to enforce the Supreme Court decision in *Olmstead v. L.C.*, a historic 1999 ruling recognizing that the unjustified segregation of people with disabilities in institutional settings is a form of discrimination under the ADA. In the last two years, the Division has joined or initiated litigation to ensure community-based services in more than 25 cases in 17 states. These include cases on behalf of persons with disabilities who had been flourishing in the community but who could be forced into nursing

homes to receive needed services due to state budget cuts. The Division is also investigating other *Olmstead* matters in five states.

In October, the Division reached a landmark settlement agreement with the state of Georgia that will allow thousands of individuals with disabilities to receive services in community settings, and will serve as a model for comprehensive agreements going forward.

In addition, the Civil Rights Division has been actively litigating cases and negotiating settlements that increase public access for people with disabilities in a wide variety of contexts. For example, in 2010, the Division obtained a consent decree on behalf of a family whose two-year-old child, who is HIV-positive, was barred from the pool and other amenities at a family-themed RV resort in Alabama while the father commuted to nearby Mobile, Alabama, for ongoing cancer treatment.

We also recognize the important and continuously growing role technology plays in our day to day lives, and we have worked to ensure that technology does not unintentionally create new barriers for individuals with disabilities. To this end, we settled cases (one jointly with ED) with five universities to ensure that electronic book readers will not be used in classroom settings unless they are accessible to students who are blind or have low vision. We were also a signatory to a settlement with the Law School Admissions Council to ensure that its common application website is accessible to law school applicants who use screen reader technology because they are blind or have low vision.

Civil Rights of Servicemembers

Several statutes enacted specifically to protect the rights of our men and women in uniform and their families fall under the Division's jurisdiction, and we have worked aggressively to enforce these important laws on behalf of those who so honorably serve their nation.

The Veterans' Benefits Act of 2010, which President Obama signed into law in October 2010, amended the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to provide explicitly that the Attorney General can bring a case against anyone who violates the Act where the violation constitutes a pattern or practice or raises an issue of significant public importance. Among other protections, the SCRA prohibits mortgage lenders from foreclosing on active duty servicemembers without a court order if the mortgage was taken out prior to the servicemember entering active duty, and requires the lender to follow special procedures.

Just last week, we announced two multi-million dollar settlements with servicers to resolve allegations that they violated the SCRA by wrongfully foreclosing upon servicemembers without first getting a court order. One of the settlements requires Bank of America/Countrywide to pay at least \$20 million to resolve allegations that the company foreclosed on around 160

servicemembers – the largest SCRA settlement ever reached. Together with the Department of Defense, we have trained attorneys in the military legal assistance program so they are well prepared to answer servicemembers’ questions and identify potential violations of the SCRA. Together with the Department of Defense, we have trained attorneys in the military legal assistance program so that they are well prepared to answer servicemembers’ questions and identify potential violations of the SCRA.

We have also worked to protect the employment rights of our men and women in uniform so that they do not have to sacrifice their civilian employment in order to serve their country. The Division has aggressively enforced the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), ensuring that service members returning from active duty are not penalized by their civilian employers.

In the first two years of the Administration, the Division filed more USERRA complaints than were filed in the previous three years combined. For example, the Division won a court order granting back pay and injunctive relief against the Alabama Department of Mental Health for failure to promptly reemploy an employee upon his return from active-duty service in Iraq.

Finally, the Division is committed to ensuring that servicemembers, and other citizens living overseas, are not denied the right to have their voices heard on Election Day. In the 2010 federal election cycle, the Civil Rights Division aggressively enforced the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), as amended by the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act of 2009, to ensure that Americans serving in our armed forces and citizens living overseas received their absentee ballots in time to ensure that they had the opportunity to vote and to have their votes counted.

We obtained court orders, court-approved consent decrees, or out-of-court letter or memorandum agreements in 14 jurisdictions (11 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia). Each of these resolutions ensured that military and overseas voters would have at least a 45-day period to receive, mark, and return their ballots, or ensured that they would be provided expedited mailing or other procedures to provide sufficient opportunity for ballots to be returned by the jurisdiction’s ballot-receipt deadline. Our actions in the 2010 election cycle ensured that thousands of military and overseas voters had a reasonable opportunity to cast their ballots. We will continue to aggressively enforce UOCAVA and the MOVE Act to ensure all servicemembers and overseas voters can have their voices heard in future federal elections.

Fair Lending

The nationwide foreclosure crisis has touched nearly every community in our country, but has disproportionately devastated communities of color. In the wake of the housing and foreclosure crisis, fair lending enforcement has been a top priority for the Division. We established a dedicated Fair Lending Unit in the Housing and Civil Enforcement Section, and have worked to strengthen partnerships with the banking regulatory agencies and HUD. In 2010,

the Division received 49 referrals from partner agencies, more than it had received in at least 20 years. Notably, 26 of those referrals were based on race or national origin discrimination, more than we received in any previous year and more than we received in the previous three years combined.

The Fair Lending Unit currently has approximately 60 open matters or investigations, including five authorized lawsuits that are in pre-suit negotiations. This includes the previously disclosed investigation of Bank of America/Countrywide, one of the nation's largest lenders during the mortgage boom.

In 2010, the Division achieved the largest monetary recovery for victims ever in a fair lending case. The \$6.1 million settlement with two subsidiaries of American International Group, Inc., (AIG) resolved allegations that the subsidiaries failed to supervise or monitor brokers in setting broker fees and that this practice had a disparate impact on African American borrowers, who were charged higher broker fees than white borrowers.

In addition, the Division late last year reached a \$2 million settlement with PrimeLending, one of the largest FHA lenders in the country and the largest FHA lender in Texas. The settlement resolved allegations that between 2006 and 2009, PrimeLending charged African-American borrowers higher interest rates for prime fixed-rate home loans than it charged similarly-situated white borrowers.

Most recently, the Division just last month concluded negotiations and filed with the federal court a settlement with Citizens Bank and Citizens Republic Bancorp to resolve redlining allegations that the lenders have failed to provide their home mortgage lending services in majority African American neighborhoods on an equal basis with white neighborhoods in the Detroit metropolitan area. The settlement will provide more than \$3.5 million in monetary relief to the formerly redlined areas. The parties currently are seeking approval of this settlement by the court.

Fair Housing

In addition to its fair lending work, our Housing and Civil Enforcement Section continues a robust docket of fair housing enforcement. Since January 21, 2009, the Section has filed 72 Fair Housing Act lawsuits.

In late 2009, the Division reached a settlement with Los Angeles apartment owner Donald Sterling to resolve allegations that he discriminated against African Americans, Hispanics, and families with children, in violation of the federal Fair Housing Act, at apartment buildings he owns in Los Angeles County. At the time, the \$2.725 million settlement was the largest ever monetary settlement secured by the Department in a case alleging discrimination in rental housing.

Last year, the Division also achieved a \$2.13 million settlement of claims of pervasive racial discrimination and harassment at an apartment building in Kansas City, Kansas, in a case involving a property manager who placed racially hostile symbols and items on the premises, such as hangman's nooses, and openly made racially derogatory and hostile remarks about African-American residents.

We also continue to see a troubling stream of cases alleging that a landlord or a landlord's agent has engaged in a pattern or practice of sexually harassing female tenants, filing seven such cases in the current administration, including three in the current fiscal year. The similarities in the underlying fact patterns of these cases are striking. The victims are typically low-income women with few housing options who are subjected to repeated sexual advances, and, in some cases, sexual assault, by predatory landlords, property managers, and maintenance workers. For example, in August 2010, a jury in Detroit returned a \$115,000 verdict in a case involving a rental agent who subjected six women to severe and pervasive sexual harassment, ranging from unwelcome sexual comments and sexual advances, to requiring sexual favors in exchange for their tenancy. One woman testified that the rental agent refused to give her keys to her apartment until she agreed to have sex with him. In addition, evidence showed that the owner of the properties knew that his employee was harassing tenants but did nothing to stop it. The jury found both the owner and the rental agent liable and awarded a total of \$115,000 in damages to six female tenants. On March 3, 2011, the court granted the United States' motion for civil penalties and injunctive relief, ordering the defendants to pay a total of \$82,500 in civil penalties to the United States.

Equal Employment Opportunity

The Division continues its work to enforce Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to ensure that all individuals have equal access to employment opportunities. Since the beginning of the Obama Administration, the Division has initiated 31 new pattern-or-practice investigations of state or local employers.

In March, the Division reached a consent decree with the Hertford County, North Carolina, Public Health Authority to resolve allegations of pregnancy discrimination. The complaint alleged the Health Authority rescinded an offer of employment and refused to hire a woman for a Health Educator Specialist position because of her pregnancy.

The Division obtained a significant victory for applicants to become New York City firefighters when a court found that the City's use of two written examinations resulted in an unlawful disparate impact on African-Americans and Latinos. In fact, the court ruled that the practices not only constituted discrimination under a disparate impact theory, but also constituted intentional discrimination based on claims asserted by intervenors representing a class of African-American applicants. The Division won class-wide back pay, 293 priority job offers, and retroactive competitive seniority and benefits for those who are hired and complete their

probationary periods. We continue to work to ensure that the city develops hiring policies that give all applicants a fair shot.

Voting Rights

Protecting the voting rights of all Americans continues to be a cornerstone of civil rights enforcement, and the Division continues its work to enforce the nation's critical voting rights laws. The Division is currently engaged in intensive efforts to prepare for the thousands of redistricting plans that will be submitted for review in the current round of redistricting. The Division has made significant substantive updates to its procedures under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act for the first time since 1987, and has updated its substantive guidance to states and local jurisdictions regarding redistricting for the first time since 2001. These new guidelines reflect practical updates, Congressional changes to the Act, and new judicial decisions.

The Division also continues to review voting changes submitted under Section 5 of the Act to ensure that these changes do not discriminate against voters based on race, color, or membership in a language minority group, and is vigorously defending the constitutionality of Section 5 in the courts. The Division is also conducting reviews of requests from covered jurisdictions for bailout from the requirements of Section 5. We have recently consented in federal court to bailout by several jurisdictions, and anticipate several more bailouts in the near future.

Meanwhile, we continue to work to ensure that voters with limited English proficiency receive the language assistance they need to cast an informed vote. In the first new enforcement action since 1998 that the Department has initiated to protect Native American voters with limited English proficiency, the Division obtained an important settlement in South Dakota involving the provision of language assistance to these voters. The Division also obtained a consent decree to protect the rights of Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican voters in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, which, according to the 2000 Census, was the county that had the largest population of Puerto Rican voters who lacked access to a bilingual ballot in the United States.

We also have launched an initiative to ensure compliance with the National Voter Registration Act (Motor Voter). In March, the Division reached an agreement with Rhode Island to require the state to offer voter registration opportunities at state offices providing public assistance and disability services. The agreement was filed in conjunction with a lawsuit under Section 7 of the NVRA – the first lawsuit the Division has filed to enforce Section 7 in seven years. In April, the first full month after the agreement was filed, agencies covered by the agreement registered 1,038 voters, compared to 661 in March. By contrast, for all of 2005 and 2006, the state reported receiving only 940 voter registration applications from public assistance agencies. The Division is also actively pursuing a number of investigations under Sections 5, 7, and 8 of the NVRA.

Religious Freedom

Our nation has long cherished religious freedom as one of our most basic and fundamental civil rights, and the Division continues to enforce the rights of individuals and congregations to practice the faith of their choosing in a variety of contexts.

We continue to see violence and threats of violence directed at individuals or congregations because of their religion. For example, just last month, a defendant was convicted of federal civil rights charges under the Church Arson Prevention Act in connection with the burning of the Macedonia Church of God in Christ in Springfield, Massachusetts, in the early morning of November 5, 2008. The conviction followed guilty pleas from two co-defendants in the case. In the hours after the election of President Obama, the men doused the predominantly African-American church with gasoline and set a fire that completely destroyed the building. The church was under construction at the time and was 75 percent complete.

In September, the Department marked the 10th anniversary of the enactment of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), and we continue to pursue cases involving religious discrimination in land use. In October, for example, the Division filed a friend-of-the-court brief in a Tennessee state court proceeding in which neighbors of a proposed mosque challenged the county's granting of a building permit. The neighbors argued that the county was wrong to treat the mosque in the same manner that it would treat a church. Our brief argued that RLUIPA required such equal treatment. The court agreed in a decision on November 17, 2010. Last summer, the Department obtained a consent decree permitting the continued operation of a "Shabbos house" next to a hospital in a New York village. The facility provides food and lodging to Sabbath-observant Jews to enable them to visit sick relatives at the hospital on the Sabbath.

Meanwhile, we also continue to work to ensure that individuals are not forced to choose between their jobs and the requirements of their faith. In 2010, we settled a case involving a Muslim correctional worker in Essex County, New Jersey who had been fired for refusing to remove her headscarf.

In October 2009, the Civil Rights Division notified the Oregon Attorney General that it was investigating whether a state law banning school teachers from wearing "any religious dress" violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The law had been on the books since 1923, and was reaffirmed in July 2009. Following receipt of the Division's letter, the state legislature passed and the governor signed into a law a repeal of the ban, ensuring that teachers would no longer be prohibited from wearing religious garb at work. In April 2010, after the law was enacted, the Civil Rights Division notified the State of Oregon that it had closed its investigation.

Finally, in response to the continued backlash against Muslim Americans, we have stepped up our outreach to Muslim communities across America. I have met with local Muslim, Arab, Sikh, and South Asian leaders. These meetings have allowed us not only to learn about

potential civil rights violations that merit further investigation, but also to build bridges to these communities that enhance trust and understanding. We will continue our efforts to reach out to Muslim communities, and all faith communities, to ensure that they know their rights under federal law and understand how to contact us when violations occur.

Partnerships

We know that much of our work can be done more efficiently and effectively when we work collaboratively with our partners across the federal government. For this reason, we have worked over the last two years to establish and strengthen partnerships to improve enforcement. For example, as mentioned above, strengthened relationships with regulatory agencies in 2010 led to more fair lending referrals to the Division than in at least the last 20 years. The President's Financial Fraud Enforcement Task Force has been instrumental in fostering these enhanced collaborative efforts. The Task Force, chaired by the Attorney General, brings together an unprecedented number of federal agencies and state and local partners to share information and resources and ensure aggressive, coordinated enforcement.

In the human trafficking context, last year the Department of Justice joined the Departments of Homeland Security and Labor to launch a nationwide Human Trafficking Enhanced Enforcement Initiative that is designed to streamline federal criminal investigations and prosecutions of human trafficking offenses. As part of the initiative, specialized Anti-Trafficking Coordination Teams will be convened in select pilot districts around the country. The teams, comprised of federal prosecutors and federal agents from multiple federal enforcement agencies, will implement a strategic action plan to combat identified human trafficking threats.

Our community outreach efforts include close cooperation with partners across the federal government. Over the past year, the Department of Justice has worked closely with the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties on regional community engagement roundtables as part of our outreach efforts to Muslim, Sikh, South Asian, and Arab communities. One such interagency meeting with community stakeholders is being held tomorrow.

Meanwhile, in the employment context, the Division has engaged in unprecedented levels of collaboration with our partner agencies in order to more effectively combat pay discrimination and other forms of employment discrimination. The Division established a pilot program to work with EEOC field offices earlier in investigations to ensure the most efficient and effective application of each agency's resources.

In the disability rights context, we recognize that individuals with disabilities can only have true equal opportunity if they have equal access in all aspects of life, such as housing, employment, health care, and education. We have been working closely with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education, and other partners to establish pathways to opportunity in a host of contexts for individuals with disabilities.

And finally, nearly all of our work benefits from strengthened partnerships with U.S. Attorney's Offices around the country. In both the criminal and civil contexts, we have worked to strengthen communication and help U.S. Attorneys offices ramp up civil rights enforcement efforts.

Conclusion

While the considerable accomplishments described above provide a sampling of the work that has occurred over the past two years, it is not an exhaustive account, and there is much more good work being done by the dedicated men and women who work in the Civil Rights Division. The breadth and scope of our work illustrates the continued need for a healthy, sustainable Civil Rights Division. In the year ahead, we will continue our work to expand opportunity for all Americans, to safeguard the fundamental infrastructure of democracy, and to protect the most vulnerable among us.

In 2011, civil rights remains the unfinished business of our country. The Civil Rights Division is responsible for enforcing some of our nation's most cherished laws. We take our obligation to protect the rights of all individuals very seriously, and we will continue to use all of the tools in our arsenal aggressively, independently, and evenhandedly so that all individuals can enjoy the rights guaranteed by our Constitution and our federal civil rights laws.

Five months ago, I was privileged to attend a ceremony in the Justice Department's Great Hall, commemorating the 50th anniversary of Robert F. Kennedy's swearing in as Attorney General. At that event, Attorney General Holder called on us "to commit ourselves to carrying on – and carrying out – [Kennedy's] mission to make gentle the life of this world, and to make good on the promise of our nation." That mission describes what we in the Civil Rights Division seek to do in our work each and every day, and will continue to do in the months and years ahead.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today about the work of the Division. I look forward to answering any questions.