



# Department of Justice

**United States Attorney Carmen M. Ortiz  
District of Massachusetts**

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## **U.S. ATTORNEY ORTIZ ANNOUNCES CIVIL RIGHTS INITIATIVE**

BOSTON, Mass. - United States Attorney Carmen M. Ortiz has announced the launch of the District's first civil rights initiative, creating a Civil Rights Enforcement Team (CRET). U.S. Attorney Ortiz announced the initiative today at a hate crimes conference in Boston, attended by more than 100 civil rights advocates and law enforcement officials.

"Vigorously enforcing federal civil rights laws is a top priority," said U.S. Attorney Ortiz. "The Civil Rights Enforcement Team will ensure a level playing field, advancing equal opportunity and protecting the rights of Massachusetts residents. Its primary mission is to restore a fair and aggressive philosophy towards enforcement, ensuring that our most critical and treasured laws continue to fulfill their purpose," concluded Ortiz.

Under U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder's leadership, upholding the civil rights of all citizens is a priority of the Department of Justice. To that end, U.S. Attorney's Offices nationwide have been tasked with reaffirming the DOJ's commitment to transforming itself in order to conduct business in new – and better – ways.

"In addition to vigorously enforcing federal civil rights laws, just as important will be our efforts to increase visibility and outreach efforts to communities and individuals who are often silent victims of these crimes," said U.S. Attorney Ortiz. "Additionally, we will be enhancing and/or establishing contacts with our state and local law enforcement agency partners."

The CRET, comprised of several prosecutors and program support staff, will be led by Assistant U.S. Attorney's Theodore Merritt of the Public Corruption and Special Prosecutions Unit and Sonya Rao of the Civil Division. Each will serve as points of contact for the community, handle intake of all civil rights matters, and implement district-wide trainings to arm federal, state and local law enforcement agencies with the necessary tools to investigate the myriad of crimes considered to be civil rights matters.

Criminal offenses that the CRET will be responsible for investigating and prosecuting include hate crimes; damage to religious property; interference with access to reproductive health services; deprivation and conspiring to deprive constitutional rights; and human trafficking, including involuntary servitude, forced labor and sex trafficking of children. Civilly, the CRET will focus on the constitutional rights of institutionalized persons; police misconduct;

disability rights enforcement; housing and civil enforcement which includes the Service Members Civil Relief Act; and employment litigation including discrimination in employment and re-employment against service members.

For more information on the Department's civil rights efforts, please visit [www.justice.gov/crt](http://www.justice.gov/crt)

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