

SEN. DEWINE: ... Four years from now, what do you want to be remembered for?

MR. GONZALES: Well, Senator --

SEN. DEWINE: Excluding -- if I could, excluding the war on terrorism.

MR. GONZALES: Senator, the -- I think the Department of Justice is somewhat unique from other agencies. I'm not sure that an attorney general can afford to focus in providing or dispensing justice in one area to the exclusion of the other. And so I would hope that, certainly at the end of four years, it would be said that Al Gonzales did the very best he could and hopefully was successful in ensuring that there was justice provided to Americans all across the spectrum on a wide variety of issues.

I also -- it is my sincere hope that I would be remembered, if I am confirmed today, as someone who renewed the vitality, the importance of the work that goes on at the Department of Justice. I know that there are some -- there are wonderful people who come to work every day, and they come to work with one goal in mind, and that is the pursuit of justice for all Americans. And I feel a special obligation, maybe a special -- an additional burden coming from the White House to reassure the career people at the department and to reassure the American people that I'm not going to politicize the Department of Justice.

But with respect to specific areas that I probably would like to have special emphasis on, of course the first one is the war on terror. I also, because of my background, believe very much in the protection of civil rights, the protection of our voting rights, the protection of our civil liberties. I continue to believe that we have too many drugs in our society, and that should be a focus. I am concerned about the violent crime in our society. I am concerned about the use of certain kinds of weapons in connection with those crimes. I think obscenity is something else that very much concerns me. I've got two young sons, and it really bothers me about how easy it is to have access to pornography. And so those are a few things that I would be focused on.

But again, I think the Department of Justice is unique and that my goal, as impossible as it may be, or it may seem, is to try to ensure that justice is administered across the spectrum.

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SEN. BROWNBACK: I think the American people want us to get outcomes, things that work. Welfare reform was something that worked, the country needed. I really think this is a key area where we've got a chance to really do something that'll work, and it's going to -- going to help, and I think it's something we can work across the aisles to get done.

A second issue you raised with Senator DeWine during your comments about things you want to be known for, and that's the issue on obscenity laws and the enforcement of that. I held a hearing last session of Congress on the issue of these -- not obscenity laws, but on addictions to pornography. And there was an amazing set of experts that came forward, talking about the addictiveness of pornography. It's grown much more potent, much more addictive, much more pervasive, much more impactful. You cited teenage children you have and that I have, and in our private conversation. There's been criticism of the Department of Justice for not enforcing obscenity laws, work on these issues on community standards. I would hope that this would be something that you would take a look at, maybe make some personnel shifts within the Department of Justice, to address this from the law standards, on community standards, look at the addictiveness in the nature of it. There are certain, obviously, guarantees of First Amendment rights, but there are also these laws that have been upheld by community standards, upheld by the Supreme Court, that can be, and I really think should be, enforced, given the nature of this very potent -- what one expert called it, delivery system, of -- in this country. And I hope you can look at that.

MR. GONZALES: I will commit to that. I will look at that, Senator.

SEN. BROWNBACK: You know, I believe you said your wife had some interest in this, and I may recruit her on this topic as well, even though she's not up for confirmation here. I'll work with her as well ...

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FRC 1/11/05:

High Priorities in New Term for Attorney General

Now that the confirmation hearing has been wrapped up for Alberto Gonzales' nomination to be the next U.S. Attorney General, it is time for some reflection on just what his duties will be as the nation's chief law enforcement official. The hearing was dominated by questions on terrorism, a very high priority for the next attorney general. But Family Research Council hopes Mr. Gonzales will make his mark on a broad set of issues. Nominations to the federal court should take up a major part of his time. It is the attorney general's responsibility to shepherd nominations through the Senate.

America is awash in illegal pornography due to lack of effective enforcement by the Department of Justice, an ongoing problem for more than a dozen years. As the next attorney general, Gonzales will have to make significant personnel changes in his prosecution team and demand vigorous enforcement of federal obscenity laws. We hope to see obscenity prosecutions become a priority once again. Questions have been raised about the pro-life credentials of Gonzales because of a ruling he made four years ago as a Texas Supreme Court justice. The Department of Justice is currently defending the federal Partial Birth Abortion Ban in several federal courts, and FRC hopes he will lead a spirited defense of this important law and that he will side with the president and the pro-family movement on other abortion-related issues. Also, the dimensions of human trafficking, a modern-day form of slavery, are overwhelming and President Bush has repeatedly highlighted this issue. I hope Mr. Gonzales will bring greater resources and public attention to help the estimated 15,000 individuals illegally trafficked into the U.S. each year.