



Office of the Attorney General
Washington, D. C. 20530

March 16, 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS

FROM:

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

SUBJECT:

COVID-19 – Department of Justice Priorities

I want to thank each of you for your tremendous service to our nation, particularly during times of crisis such as these. Please pass along my sincere appreciation to your staffs as they continue to carry out their important duties. Despite the hardships ahead, I have faith that we will get through this together. To that end, I am today issuing two directives to each of your Offices.

I. PROTECTING THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

As we face the nationwide spread of COVID-19, I want to emphasize that the critical mission of the Department of Justice must and will continue. We will ensure that the Department's law enforcement functions operate effectively during this outbreak. It is vital that we work together to safeguard our justice system and thus the safety and security of our nation.

As part of our response, I ask that each of you work closely with the Chief Judge in your district to ensure that every appropriate precaution is taken to protect the health of those who practice in or are called before our courts. We must take every appropriate precaution to protect those who make the system function, including the judges, court staff, lawyers, parties, jurors, and witnesses who appear in courtrooms. Tomorrow, I will be notifying the Judicial Conference of the United States of our commitment to safeguard the entire court family, as well as my directive to each of you to work with your Chief Judges to ensure the Department's and the judiciary's continuity of operations.

The Deputy Attorney General and I, along with our staffs and the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, are here to support each of you and your offices during this time. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us for assistance. I also encourage all of you to continue to collaborate as we work to identify the best strategies to carry us forward.

II. DETECTING, DETERRING, AND PUNISHING WRONGDOING

In addition to ensuring that the justice system can continue functioning during the current national crisis, it is essential that the Department of Justice remain vigilant in detecting, investigating, and prosecuting wrongdoing related to the crisis. In particular, there have been reports of individuals and businesses selling fake cures for COVID-19 online and engaging in other forms of fraud, reports of phishing emails from entities posing as the World Health Organization or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and reports of malware being inserted onto mobile apps designed to track the spread of the virus. The pandemic is dangerous enough without wrongdoers seeking to profit from public panic and this sort of conduct cannot be tolerated. Every U.S. Attorney's Office is thus hereby directed to prioritize the detection, investigation, and prosecution of all criminal conduct related to the current pandemic.

Your Office is encouraged to consult with the Civil Division's Consumer Protection Branch (Gus Eyler), the Criminal Division's Fraud Section (John Cronan), and the Antitrust Division's Criminal Program (Richard Powers) for additional guidance on how to detect, investigate, and prosecute these schemes. Your Office is also encouraged to work closely with state and local authorities to both ensure that we hear about misconduct as quickly as possible and that all appropriate enforcement tools are available to punish it.