

**May 24, 2012**

**Holder Promotes Drug Courts at Superior Court Program Graduation**



U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder Jr., addressed graduates of the D.C. Superior Court's Drug Court program today, praising them as proof that problem-solving courts and diversion programs - once a controversial idea - have been a success.

The ceremony was also something of a homecoming for Holder, who was a judge on the Superior Court bench from 1988 to 1993 and then served as the U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia from 1993 to 1997. Drawing on his experience in the local courts and now overseeing public safety initiatives nationwide, Holder said he could appreciate how significant it was for participants to overcome their addictions and avoid rearrest.

Citing the high rates of drug use and addiction among people who are arrested or incarcerated, Holder said that, "fortunately, the people in this room are demonstrating that it's possible to break this destructive pattern."

More than three dozen people were honored today for either graduating the program or moving between one of the program's four treatment phases. Each phase, which can take between four to six weeks, requires clean drug tests and meeting a certain minimum attendance at meetings and group therapy. Graduates have their criminal records cleared.

U.S. Attorney Ronald Machen Jr. served as the government's representative at the ceremony, formally informing Judge Frederick Weisberg, who presides over the drug court program, that the government did not intend to pursue criminal cases against each of the graduates as they came up to receive certificates.

Superior Court started its drug court program in 1993, making it one of the first local courts to adopt a system that provided alternatives to incarceration for non-violent drug offenders. It's considered the model for other problem-solving courts.

Holder, in his remarks, noted that since the first drug courts began in the late 1980s, more than a million people have graduated. This year, the more than 2,600 drug courts nationwide will serve an estimated 120,000 people, he said.

West Huddleston, CEO of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, shared his own experience with addiction at age 19 and how "a nudge from a judge" saved his life by sending him to a treatment program. He urged the graduates to not be afraid to seek help if they still need it moving forward.

David Minetta, a deputy director in the Office of National Drug Control Policy, said that drug courts are an "essential" part of the administration's drug policies. He cited recent studies that showed 84 percent of drug court graduates nationwide have not been rearrested and charged with a serious crime within one year of finishing, and 72.5 percent remain arrest-free after two years.

Holder told the graduates that by continuing with their recovery, they were serving as models for others in their communities. "Your success can be duplicated, it can be replicated," he said.

*National Law Journal photos by Zoe Tillman.*



*Superior Court Judge Frederick Weisberg, left, and U.S. Attorney Ron Machen Jr. wait to congratulate graduates.*



*Superior Court Chief Judge Lee Satterfield.*



*West Huddleston, CEO of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals.*



*David Minetta, a deputy director at the Office of National Drug Control Policy.*



*Judge Frederick Weisberg, left, looks on as U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder Jr. greets David Minetta.*

Posted by [Zoe Tillman](#) on May 24, 2012 at 03:10 PM