



U.S. Department of Justice

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **U.S. Attorney Machen Announces Selection of Consultants To Work With Office's New Conviction Integrity Unit Experienced Attorneys to Help Assess Cases, Recommend Best Practices**

WASHINGTON – U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. today announced the selection of two independent consultants who will provide guidance and outside expertise to the U.S. Attorney's Office's newly created Conviction Integrity Unit.

The consultants are Jeffrey D. Robinson, Senior Counsel at Lewis Baach, and Kristine Hamann, a Visiting Fellow at the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, who specializes in developing "Best Practices" programs for prosecutor's offices.

"In standing up the first federal Conviction Integrity Unit, we wanted to bring in outside counsel who would offer a fresh perspective to our review process in order to ensure that we were reaching the right conclusions when assessing these innocence claims," said U.S. Attorney Machen. "Our goal is to not only identify historic wrongful convictions but to do everything in our power to prevent those wrongful convictions from occurring on a going forward basis. I am confident that these experienced attorneys will offer thoughtful, independent feedback that helps us achieve both of these goals."

The Conviction Integrity Unit, established in September 2014, will review cases in which defendants convicted of violent felonies can proffer new evidence that merits reconsideration, including those in which DNA testing of biological material may establish actual innocence. Cases will be reviewed by experienced prosecutors and investigators from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, who then will determine if further action is needed.

Mr. Robinson and Ms. Hamann have agreed to serve as a resource to the Conviction Integrity Unit by reviewing material relating to incoming claims and providing their individual assessments of the potential merits of and investigative steps necessary as to those claims. Once a

claim has been thoroughly re-investigated, Mr. Robinson and Ms. Hamann will be available to consult with the U.S. Attorney about the proposed outcome.

Finally, Mr. Robinson and Ms. Hamann will offer their guidance as to recommended training, policy revisions, and changes in trial practice suggested by the conviction review process. Shawn Armburst, the Executive Director of the Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project, also will assist the Conviction Integrity Unit in recommending changes in training, policy, and trial practice.

This is the first Conviction Integrity Unit created within a U.S. Attorney's Office. A number of prosecutors' offices nationwide have established such units in recent years, including the Manhattan District Attorney's Office and the Dallas County District Attorney's Office. As the Conviction Integrity Unit's work continues, additional consultants could be named.

The unit, which began reviewing cases this fall, is part of the office's Special Proceedings Division, which handles all post-conviction litigation in both the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia and the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

The external consultants have extensive experience with criminal justice issues:

**Jeffrey D. Robinson**, Senior Counsel at Lewis Baach, is an experienced litigator who handles complex commercial and civil rights matters, responds to governmental and congressional investigations, develops legal strategies, and addresses media inquiries. He was lead counsel in the case establishing that racially targeted predatory lending is a violation of the Fair Housing Act. Mr. Robinson has a long and distinguished career in areas in which traditional law and litigation intersect with public policy and politics. He served for four years as Associate Director-Counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund (LDF), where he successfully led an effort to reform California's Three Strikes law through a ballot initiative, and he also played an important role in multiple legislative efforts, including the inclusion of civil rights protections in the Affordable Care Act and criminal justice reform measures before the Senate and House Judiciary Committees. Mr. Robinson worked on behalf of Vice President Al Gore during the 2000 election Florida vote-count challenge, serving as trial counsel and a media spokesman. Mr. Robinson is a former Principal Deputy in the District of Columbia Office of the Corporation Counsel (now the District of Columbia Office of the Attorney General). He also is a former Deputy Assistant Attorney General for Legislative Affairs and a Subcommittee Chief Counsel on the Senate Judiciary Committee.

**Kristine Hamann**, a Visiting Fellow at the Department of Justice/Bureau of Justice Assistance, works with prosecutors throughout the country to develop statewide Best Practices Committees. She also is the chair of the Best Practices Committee for the New York State District Attorney's Association. The Committee develops best practices and innovative strategies aimed at improving the criminal justice system and preventing wrongful convictions. The Committee has led statewide initiatives that include enhanced identification procedures, video interrogation protocols, an Ethics Handbook for prosecutors, and discovery training for the police. Ms. Hamann has decades of experience as a prosecutor. From 2008 to 2013, she was the Executive Assistant District Attorney for the Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York. The office conducts international, national, and local drug trafficking investigations and prosecutions, which impact New York City. From 2007 to 2008, she was the New York State

Inspector General, charged with investigating and preventing fraud, waste and abuse in state government. Before serving as Inspector General, Ms. Hamann served more than 25 years at the New York County District Attorney's Office, including nine years as the Executive Assistant District Attorney to Robert M. Morgenthau in the Manhattan District Attorney's Office. She also has worked as an associate at Simpson Thacher and Bartlett in New York.

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