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## **Susan Gaertner to Receive Top National Award from American Bar Association Criminal Justice Section**

WASHINGTON, D.C., -- Ramsey County, Minn., Attorney Susan Gaertner has been selected to receive the prestigious Norm Maleng Minister of Justice Award, a national award presented by the Criminal Justice Section of the American Bar Association.

The award is presented to a prosecutor who exemplifies the principles of the *ABA Standards for Criminal Justice, Prosecution Function*, namely to a prosecutor who exemplifies the principle that the “duty of the prosecutor is to seek justice, not merely to convict.” Gaertner is the eighth person to receive the award.

“Throughout her career, Susan Gaertner has placed her pursuit of justice above all other individual goals,” said Jack Hanna, staff director of the ABA Criminal Justice Section.

The award will be presented at the association’s Annual Meeting in Chicago on Friday, July 31, 2009.

Gaertner’s justice initiatives, including a review of past convictions to determine if current DNA technology would shed new light on any of the cases, were especially impressive, Hanna explained. The DNA technology project resulted in the exoneration of a man convicted of rape – believed to be the first exoneration in the United States to result from a prosecution-initiated, post-conviction DNA testing program.

Gaertner also initiated a new Uniform Evidence Retention Policy to ensure that DNA evidence is preserved for future testing so as to both protect the public and the rights of the accused. In addition, she advocated for new photo lineup procedures to minimize the chance of faulty eyewitness identifications and wrongful convictions.

“I have tried my best to seek the truth and ensure that justice is done in every case,” Gaertner said. “It is extremely gratifying to have those efforts recognized by my colleagues around the country.”

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The award also recognizes innovative community initiatives instituted by Gaertner, such as the Truancy Intervention Program, which seeks to improve school attendance, and the Joint Domestic Abuse Prosecution Unit, which focuses on domestic assaults where children are present.

According to Hanna, the award committee determined that Gaertner has embodied the following principles: 1) the prosecutor's obligation is to protect the innocent as well as to convict the guilty; 2) the prosecutor must guard the rights of the accused as well as enforce the rights of the public; and 3) the prosecutor's commitment to the legal and ethical standards must be unwavering.

Gaertner has served as the elected Ramsey County attorney since 1995. She is only the fourth person to hold the office since 1933 and is the first woman to hold the office. She was an assistant Ramsey County attorney for 10 years before her election. Gaertner has prosecuted many complex criminal cases, and continues to personally prosecute cases when her schedule permits.

Her activities include having been a vice chair at large on the Governing Council of the ABA's Criminal Justice Section, serving as president of the Minnesota County Attorneys Association twice, and sitting on the board of directors of the National District Attorneys Association for 14 years.

The Minister of Justice Award is named in honor of Norm Maleng, who served as the King County (Seattle) prosecutor from 1978 until his death in 2007. He was a very effective and, in many ways, a tough prosecutor, being particularly protective of those he viewed as vulnerable, creating special prosecutorial units to deal with child abuse, sexual assault and domestic violence. He chaired the Criminal Justice Section in 2003-04 and served on its Criminal Justice Standards Committee in the early 1990's. In 2006, Norm Maleng was given the Section's Minister of Justice Award recognizing his embodiment of the principles enunciated in the *ABA Standards for Criminal Justice, Prosecution Function*, particularly: "The duty of the prosecutor is to seek justice, not merely to convict."

Here is a list of past recipients:

- 2002 E. Michael McCann, Milwaukee County District Attorney, Milwaukee
- 2003 Cal Rerucha, Albany County Attorney, Laramie, WY; and David Schwendiman, Assistant U.S. Attorney, Utah
- 2004 None
- 2005 Charles J. Hynes, Kings County District Attorney, Brooklyn, NY
- 2006 Norm Maleng, King County Prosecutor, Seattle,
- 2007 Lt. Col V. Stuart Couch, U.S. Marine Corps, who withdrew the prosecution of a Guantanamo Bay detainee because he believed evidence in the case had been obtained through torture and was therefore inadmissible under U.S. and international law
- 2008 Gary L. Walker, Marquette County Prosecuting Attorney, Marquette, Mich.

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