

Remarks of The Archivist of the United States

David S. Ferriero

Good morning, I'm David Ferriero, Archivist of the United States. We are delighted to be the host for this year's Emmett Leahy Award. As Charles [Dollar] just noted, Emmett Leahy was a longtime esteemed member of the greater National Archives family. It is particularly nice to know that a number of former NARA staffers have come back for today's ceremony.

It is with special pride to NARA that we celebrate and honor one of our lawyers with the prestigious Emmett Leahy Award today, Mr. Jason R. Baron. Jason is Director of Litigation in our Office of General Counsel. He is in fact the first and only person to have held this job, having been selected by Gary M. Stern, our General Counsel, to come to the National Archives in 2000. He came here after serving 20 years as a trial lawyer in government, first at the Department of Health and Human Services, and then after a dozen years in the Civil Division of the US Department of Justice.

In addition to a prior award from NARA that Jason received while still a Justice Department attorney for his work in fashioning the 1995 e-mail regulations, in the decade since he came here to work Jason has been recognized with three of the highest honors this agency gives. He received Archivist Awards in 2002, "for extraordinary efforts in reviewing Presidential email records and assisting the Justice Department" in the U.S. versus Philip Morris case; in 2005, "for extraordinary services to the White House, the Senate, the public and the press in providing access to records pertaining to John Roberts," and in 2009, "for bringing the electronic records of the George W. Bush Administration into NARA's custody." He has received many other honors and awards as well during his time in government, including from DOJ, NSC, HHS, SSA, as well as a Fed 100 award for his contributions to e-discovery advocacy.

In my almost two years as Archivist, I have come to know Jason Baron and appreciate his expertise and respect he has earned from his peers. In his time at the Department of Justice and the National Archives, he has become what many people regard as the "go to" lawyer in the government on issues involving preservation of electronic records under the Federal Records Act. I know that Gary Stern and all of us at NARA greatly value his advice and counsel on all such matters, and in zealously defending the interests of this agency in litigation.

I have also seen Jason in action at NARA conferences, as I'm sure many of you have – and I can tell you that he always exceeds expectations (which isn't hard when the subject is compliance with records management). He is surely destined for his own slot in the Comedy Central lineup. Stay tuned!

Jason is truly an enthusiastic champion of NARA's mission everywhere he goes, and believe me he has gone everywhere – from Barcelona to Beijing, having given lectures and conducted workshops in numerous countries around the world in addition to making over 200 appearances in the US before federal agencies and at conference venues. In recent years Jason has been a thought leader in pushing the federal government to adopt smarter forms of electronic archiving, and in finding better ways to search through large volumes of the government's electronically stored record information.

Finally, I can tell you all that Jason is universally admired and liked by NARA staff. Just one example is an email that came in about today's event from a long time senior records analyst Mark Ferguson in our Denver regional office:

Congratulations on winning the Emmett Leahy Award, the Nobel and Pulitzer of our profession. There is no higher honor for records managers. I am so pleased that a NARA employee won it and it is well-deserved. We in the National Records Management Program are so fortunate to have a Director of Litigation who actually takes an interest in the missions of our agency and provides such excellent counsel on how we should approach the complex issues facing life-cycle management of Federal records. I am glad you stayed on past your stated retirement date to get this honor.

Jason, from all of 3500 of us in the NARA family, we extend our sincere congratulations upon this occasion and our thanks for your many years of wise counsel and service.