



## ATTORNEY GENERAL OF MISSOURI

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### **2019 Attorney General Eric Schmitt Swearing-In Address**

Edward Bates, the son of a Revolutionary War hero, moved to the Missouri Territory in the early 1800s as a young man. As a lawyer, he played a key role in Missouri achieving statehood, then served as a member of Missouri's first Constitutional Convention and as our state's first Attorney General. Later in life he would serve as Abraham Lincoln's Attorney General during our nation's Civil War. Other iconic names and serious figures in our state's history have occupied the office of Attorney General, names like Eagleton, Danforth, Ashcroft – and more recently Nixon, Koster and Hawley. Some have been presidential candidates, vice presidential selections, senators, governors and UN ambassadors, but if you talk to those still living – as I have – it is clear that their work in this office is a real source of pride and was consequential. Being sworn in as the lawyer for six million Missourians is an honor of a lifetime, and I stand on the shoulders of those who came before me and vow to uphold the rule of law and lead an office of integrity and professionalism.

Beyond the Attorneys General themselves are the literally thousands of attorneys and staff members over the years, plus those working in this office right now, who have stepped up and admirably answered the call to serve their fellow citizens. Some have served in this office for decades; some others have served our justice system in different capacities after leaving, and are better lawyers for their time spent here; and others yet have gone on to serve as judges at the state and federal level, including a current Justice on the United States Supreme Court. You see, this office has an incredible tradition. One worth honoring, and one worth cultivating.

The men and women of the Attorney General's Office aren't just assets here, but also to their communities. They are Church leaders, volunteers, little league coaches and charity event organizers – they are individuals with their own families, making a difference not only in this office but also in the broader world around us. Part of my job, and part of our culture here, will be to honor and celebrate that service as an organization.

The job of Attorney General of the great state of Missouri is a serious responsibility, and as the state's chief legal officer, I take that responsibility seriously. This office has jurisdiction over both criminal and civil matters all over Missouri – this office handles everything from local consumer protection matters to cases in controversy that make their way all the way to the highest court in the land.

There is a phrase inscribed on the outside of this building that reads: "The law has honored us. May we honor it." So today we begin. As a team, a team gathered in this time and place to work on behalf of the people and the law. All the while knowing we are all just temporary guardians of

these offices, but with a sacred charge. That sacred charge is consecrated by my oath of office today – to defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of Missouri. There isn't anything in that oath about politics or political party. So we will honor the law, fiercely and with the undying commitment to justice and the rule of law. We will honor the law as it has honored us: with a deep level of professionalism guided by the idea to always do what is right and just.

Our goal is simple: to make this office the envy of Attorney General Offices across the country and to make this office the best law firm in the state; to do right by our fellow citizens and always work to protect them from any and all threats.

As we approach our state's bicentennial, Missouri has always wrestled with conflict and compromise, in fact it is upon this predicate that we entered the union. During the Civil War, we actually had two governments, but we have always survived and thrived because the people of this state have always remembered we all have far more in common than what sets us apart.

In that vein, I think we can all agree that people deserve to feel safe. In fact, governments at their basic level exist to protect the safety and welfare of their citizenry and to secure the people's God-given rights. As Missouri's Chief Law Enforcement Officer, my job is to execute our laws and protect my fellow citizens.

No single mom in Kansas City should fear that she might lose her son to gang violence. No family should at all be concerned about heading down to the ballgame in downtown St. Louis. No child in Chillicothe should lose her dad to the opioid epidemic. No young woman in Warrensburg should fear being a victim of the growing epidemic of human trafficking. No grandmother in Greene County should fear losing her life savings from an elaborate scheme to defraud her. Nor should we accept taxpayers being ripped off by Medicaid fraudsters – robbing precious resources from those who need it most. My job, my duty is to protect Missourians, and I'll work hard every single day to do just that.

Finally, I'd like to give a special thanks to my family. To my mom and my dad for their undying encouragement, and instilling in me the belief that there is no substitute for hard work and to always believe in the possible. To my mother- and father-in-law for their support. And to my three children – Stephen, Sophia, Olivia – I've said it before, although dad has a new job, my most important job is being your dad.

And to my wife, Jaime, thank you for everything. You are the best partner I could have ever hoped for in this life, and marrying you is the best decision I've ever made.

So now it is time to get to work – with the humility and conviction necessary to honor this office – and fight for all six million Missourians.