

David J. Hickton JD

Founding Director

David J. Hickton founded the University of Pittsburgh Institute for Cyber Law, Policy, and Security in 2017. Hickton also has faculty appointments as professor in the [School of Law](#), the [School of Computing and Information](#), and the [Graduate School of Public and International Affairs](#).

Hickton served as staff director and senior counsel to the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis from May 2020 – June 2021.

Prior to coming to Pitt, Hickton served as United States Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania. He was nominated by former President Barack Obama on May 20, 2010, and was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on Aug. 5, 2010. He was sworn in as the District's 57th U.S. Attorney in August 2010 and served through November 2016.

Hickton previously engaged in the private practice of law, specifically in the areas of transportation, litigation, commercial and white-collar crime. He began his legal career serving as a law clerk for the Honorable U. S. District Judge Gustave Diamond from 1981 to 1983. For more than a decade, Hickton was an adjunct professor at the Duquesne University School of Law, where he taught antitrust.

A fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers and the Academy of Trial Lawyers of Allegheny County, Hickton has been admitted before numerous courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. At the request of President Bill Clinton, he previously served on the President's Advisory Committee on the Arts for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Hickton has long been a staunch supporter of many civic organizations, including those that benefit children and the arts. He served as an executive board member and president of Pittsburgh Public Theater and was a member of the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust.

Hickton was nominated by President Biden to serve on the Public Interest Declassification Board and served from January 2024 to December 2024. Hickton also serves as the managing trustee of the National Opioid Abatement Trust II and on the boards of directors of the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission, AmeriServ Financial, Inc., and World Affairs Council Pittsburgh. He is a Non-Resident Senior Advisor at the Center for Strategic & International Studies and a Distinguished Fellow of the Azure Forum for Contemporary Security Strategy.

Mr. Hickton is a 1978 graduate of the Pennsylvania State University and a 1981 graduate of the University of Pittsburgh School of Law.

In 2016, Pitt's School of Law named Hickton one of its Distinguished Alumni. That same year, The Legal Intelligencer named him Pennsylvania Attorney of the Year. Hickton and his wife, Dawne, have been generous supporters of Pitt in a number of projects, including helping to establish the Loren H. Roth, MD, Summer Research Program in the School of Medicine. Pitt recognized Hickton as a Legacy Laureate in 2013 and also that year presented him with its 225th anniversary medallion, an honor bestowed on alumni who have brought particular honor to the university through their work and service.

During his tenure as U.S. Attorney, Hickton's signature achievements included:

Addressing the Cyber Threat

- Brought first of its kind indictment against five members of the Chinese military for economic espionage against Pittsburgh-based companies and organizations.
- Created a dedicated section in the U.S. Attorney's Office to focus on cybercrime and national security.
- Prosecuted groundbreaking cases such as Darkode, the largest English-speaking cybercrime forum, and Evgeniy Bogachev, creator of GameOver Zeus and Cryptolocker malware, among others.

Combating the National Heroin and Opioid Crisis

- Co-chaired the National Heroin Task Force.

- Formed U.S. Attorney's Working Group on Drug Overdoses and Addiction, which includes key federal, state and local law enforcement along with public health and public safety staff.
- Brought community impact prosecutions against large-scale heroin traffickers and worked to reduce stigma, minimize the criminalization of addiction and improve access to treatment.

Enhancing Community Police Trust

- Assembled a Community Police Working Group in 2011 to build trust for and from law enforcement and the citizens they serve.
- Established a civil rights section in U.S. Attorney's Office.
- Pittsburgh selected as one of six pilot cities for the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice by Attorney General Loretta Lynch.

Significant Civil Recovers and Achievements

- EDMC - Achieved a historic settlement of \$95.5 million, the largest False Claims Act (FCA) recovery of Department of Education funds.
- Pennsylvania Department of Corrections – Secured fundamental changes throughout the prison system to humanely address the issues of unconstitutional confinement conditions for those suffering from serious mental illness and for victims of institutional sexual assault.
- GameOver Zeus Botnet - Utilized civil injunctions in conjunction with criminal prosecution to dismantle a global network of infected victim computers used by cybercriminals to steal millions of dollars from businesses and consumers.

Hickton has been featured in a variety of [publications and media](#), both locally and nationally. For any media inquiries, please email cyber@pitt.edu.

List Weight

