

REMARKS

OF

**THE HONORABLE LAURIE ROBINSON
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS**

AT THE

**NATIONAL DISTRICT ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION
2012 CAPITAL CONFERENCE**

ON

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2012
WASHINGTON, DC**

Thank you, Jan [Scully]. It's great to be here this morning.

I'm so glad to have the chance to return this year and thank all of you at NDAA for your partnership with OJP. We value so much the opportunity to work with our nation's prosecutors.

And I want to specifically thank Jan, with whom I've had the great pleasure of meeting and discussing issues of mutual interest and concern to both our organizations. And let me offer my public congratulations again, Jan, on being the first woman to serve as NDAA's president!

I also want to single out my good friend Scott Burns. Scott and I have known each other for a number of years, and I can't say enough about what an outstanding ambassador he's been for NDAA in Washington – for prosecutors, and for the criminal justice field generally. He's right in the thick of every new development, he has such a command of the issues, and he's just a wonderful person to know and work with. Scott, you are the best!

As some of you may remember, I was snowed out of your conference two years ago, and last year was my first opportunity to address you as a full body. I talked about what a hopeful time this was for our partnership, now that we have an Attorney General steeped in local prosecution – from his days as U.S. Attorney here in D.C. – and a Department of Justice committed to strengthening ties with the field. I discussed several areas where we were making excellent progress, and I talked about how we could build on our momentum.

Today, my remarks will be more reflective than forward-looking – and also a little bittersweet. As many of you know, I recently announced that I'm leaving my post as Assistant Attorney General at the end of February, so this will be one of my last major speeches. My decision wasn't easy; so much of my heart and soul – not to mention nearly 10 years of my life – have been invested in OJP. But I feel it's the right time.

I've done much of what I'd hoped to accomplish when I came back to OJP – two things in particular: strengthening partnerships with the field and instilling an evidence-based focus in our policies and programs. These were at the top of a list of 10 goals I brought with me to OJP in 2009.

First, when I returned, I felt strongly that OJP needed a renewed emphasis on its relationships with its stakeholders – including prosecutors, which are such a critical group. This centered on opening lines of communication more than on any specific funding, training, or other initiative. I wanted to make sure OJP was really paying attention to the issues of greatest concern to prosecutors – and that our actions responded to those concerns.

A prime example is JAG-Byrne. I've always considered this OJP's flagship program – it's such a critical resource for local justice system agencies, especially in

these tough budget times. The pressure to scale back this funding continues, but the Attorney General and I have fought hard to keep those resources available.

Of course, our partnership is about more than funding. It's about working together and sharing ideas – and I think we've made great strides here.

Consider our work in the area of mortgage fraud. This was an issue you raised with the Associate Attorney General, Tom Perrelli, in the Executive Working Group. And, as you heard in the President's State of the Union address, mortgage fraud and related crimes continue to be a target of aggressive enforcement by the Administration and by this Department of Justice.

As part of our work on the interagency financial fraud task force, OJP – through our Bureau of Justice Assistance – has awarded almost \$18.5 million to state and local prosecutors' offices to support mortgage fraud investigation and prosecution. And NDAA has been a key training and technical assistance partner, as evidenced by the mortgage fraud training curriculum you're helping to develop.

There's also the work we've done together to improve the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and child sexual abuse. Our Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and your National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse have worked closely together to train and assist thousands of professionals. Last year alone, we trained more than 12,500 people – and an additional 900 through NDAA's E-Learning Center.

My second goal on returning to OJP was to help restore the role of science in criminal justice policy and practice – and to make sure the research and knowledge-building we support at OJP benefit practitioners.

When I was teaching at the University of Pennsylvania, I developed the idea of a “what works” clearinghouse that would house distilled information about effective criminal justice practices that could be shared with the field. Busy practitioners just don't have time to read long academic journal articles about research.

So from the moment I arrived at OJP in 2009, I set out to make this a reality. And last June, I was proud to announce the launch of CrimeSolutions.gov. This is a new Web site – a database, if you will – of more than 160 criminal and juvenile justice programs, each rated for effectiveness.

And this spring – though I'll no longer be with the Department – I'm pleased that OJP will be launching a companion help desk and diagnostic center. This will serve as a “one-stop” consultation service to help state, local, and tribal policymakers adopt evidence-based strategies. I think this will help the field take advantage of the large and growing base of knowledge we have about “what works.”

And just as important as the work we've done to integrate social science research into practice is the work we've done in the "hard" sciences – specifically, in the area of forensics. Our National Institute of Justice has done groundbreaking work that's opened the door for using DNA to solve property crimes and decades-old cold cases, as they're doing out in Denver under Mitch Morrissey. I'm proud that we've helped to supply prosecutors and investigators with critical tools and information that can help you do your jobs even better.

So, I decided the time was right to leave because we've generated serious positive momentum in fighting crime and bringing offenders to justice. And I feel really good about where we are because we have leaders waiting in the wings who are committed to working with you – our stakeholders – to move the field forward.

Many of you know my Principal Deputy, Mary Lou Leary, who is here with me today and will take the reins once I'm gone. Mary Lou is a veteran local prosecutor who knows your issues and understands your challenges – and she has the ear of the Attorney General. She will be an invaluable ally to you, and I can guarantee she will continue to fight for the resources you need.

She'll be ably served – as I have been – by my Chief of Staff, Thomas Abt, who's also here today and is, himself, a former prosecutor. You can be sure that Thomas will continue to reflect the needs of the prosecution community in OJP's policy and program discussions.

Mary Lou, Thomas, and Deputy Assistant Attorney General Jim Burch – who many of you know from his days as Acting Director of BJA – will attest to the strong commitment – throughout OJP – to supporting our nation's prosecutors. Rest assured, you have many friends at the Office of Justice Programs.

I've often said there's no more central leader in criminal justice than the elected prosecutor. In you is embodied the will of the community to effect positive and lasting change.

These are, without question, challenging times. You're faced with a growing array of responsibilities and a shrinking pot of resources. But in spite of these challenges, you've helped to make our criminal justice system more effective, more relevant, and more just than ever.

It's been a privilege to serve America's prosecutors from my perch at OJP, and I leave the Department of Justice hopeful that – with your leadership and commitment – the future will be even brighter.

Thank you.

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