



Department of Justice

Office of Justice Programs



REMARKS OF
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ACTING ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' SERVICE AWARDS CEREMONY
FRIDAY, APRIL 23, 2021
WASHINGTON, DC

Thank you, Katherine [Darke Schmitt]. It's a pleasure to welcome everyone to this year's National Crime Victims' Service Awards Ceremony. I would like to congratulate all our outstanding award recipients. It is such an honor to recognize each of you for your contributions to crime victims across our country.

Let me also thank Katherine and the incredible staff of our Office for Victims of Crime for all the hard work that went into planning today's event, and for all they do, every day, to support crime victims. And of course, thanks to everyone in our virtual audience for being part of today's ceremony and for the exceptional work that you do to serve crime victims each and every day.

Just over a year ago, an almost unprecedented public health crisis dealt a setback to victim services in America. Domestic violence shelters, counseling and treatment centers, even hospitals were forced to shut their doors or scale back services. Face-to-face interaction between victims and service providers had to be curtailed, and in many cases, people were trapped at home with their abusers, many of whom were suddenly out of work and struggling to make ends meet. The situation was volatile, and victims were increasingly vulnerable.

But advocates found creative and effective ways to intervene. Service professionals manned hotlines and expanded online options. They checked in on people they knew were at risk. They even established codes so that they could communicate with victims whose every move was being monitored and controlled.

At a time when many people were throwing up their hands in frustration, these dedicated advocates found a way to keep doing what they had always done: help victims in need. It is that resourcefulness and resilience in the face of adversity that we celebrate today.

The amazing individuals and teams we are honoring continue a long tradition of excellence. We are awed by their achievements, and we are just as awed by the powerful legacy of service and selflessness that they represent.

I am very proud that the Office of Justice Programs has played a role in securing that legacy.

Our Office for Victims of Crime continues to support thousands of local victim assistance programs and victim compensation programs in every state. They are also working every day to build the capacity of victim service professionals to meet a host of challenges, from human trafficking to hate crimes to victimization in Indian country.

Grants from other parts of OJP are helping victims in other ways – by helping abused and exploited children, by finding missing persons and by supporting research on a range of victims’ issues. And of course the National Crime Victimization Survey, which is owned by our Bureau of Justice Statistics, remains the best source of data about crime victims in America.

This important work will continue, and it has the unqualified support of our Attorney General.

I would be remiss if I did not remind everyone that National Crime Victims’ Rights Week takes place during National Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Month and National Child Abuse Prevention Month. One of our honorees is a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. Others have devoted their careers to serving victims of sexual and domestic violence. They remind us of the unspeakable trauma that these crimes inflict on their victims. I encourage everyone watching today to reaffirm your commitment to supporting survivors of these crimes and to creating a world where everyone is free from sexual violence and child abuse.

Again, it is an honor to recognize our award recipients. They have helped to make our world a more just and more compassionate place, and they are an inspiration to us all.

It’s now my privilege to share a message from our Attorney General. He is unable to join us live, but he has recorded a special video message in honor of our award recipients.

Attorney General Garland has a long history of service right here in the Department of Justice. He began as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, then served as the Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Department’s Criminal Division, and finally, he served as Principal Associate Deputy Attorney General from 1994 until 1997. As the Principal Associate Deputy Attorney General, he oversaw the prosecutions for the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the Unabomber and the 1996 Atlanta Olympics bombing.

He went on to be appointed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, where he served as Chief Judge. President Biden appointed him to the post of Attorney General earlier this year, and he was confirmed by the Senate last month.

We’re very glad that he took time to share this video message.

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