

**REMARKS**

**OF**

**ALAN R. HANSON  
ACTING ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL  
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS**

**AT THE**

**2017 VOCA NATIONAL TRAINING CONFERENCE**

**ON**

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2017  
WASHINGTON, DC**

**Thank you, Marilyn. I'm very pleased to be here.**

**I want to thank the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators and the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards for organizing this conference, and for all they do to support victims and victim service providers.**

**A special thanks to Ethel, Dan, and Steve for their leadership and for faithfully and skillfully representing the interests of state VOCA administrators and the nation's crime victims.**

**And of course, thanks to Marilyn and the fantastic staff of our Office for Victims of Crime. Their commitment to victims shows in everything they do, and their work does credit to the Department of Justice. I'm proud to have them as part of the OJP team.**

**I'm also proud to represent an Attorney General who cares deeply about the issues facing crime victims. I had the privilege of working with Jeff Sessions as a member of his Senate staff, and I can personally vouch for his devotion to the cause of victims' rights. In his many years on Capitol Hill, he was a steadfast champion, going so far as to support a victims' constitutional amendment. He carries that commitment into his role as our nation's chief law enforcement officer.**

**As evidence of that commitment, his Task Force on Crime Reduction and Public Safety is exploring solutions to the crime problems in our communities, the brunt of which is borne by victims and survivors. The Attorney General understands that it's victims who experience, first hand, the damage that crime causes. They know better than anyone what can happen when we become complacent about violence. And this is no time to become complacent.**

**Crime is on the rise in many of America's cities. In some cases, we're seeing alarming spikes. In 2015, we saw the largest one-year increase in violent crime since 1991, and the biggest jump in the murder rate in half a century. Preliminary data for the first half of 2016 show further increases. We saw an uptick in murders in large cities of 22 percent compared with the same period last year.**

**These numbers are very troubling, but even they don't fully reflect the toll that crime takes. For every assault, for every case of fraud, for every rape and murder, there are individual victims who pay the price – in a life upended, if not destroyed. We owe it to them and their families to deliver on the promise of safety and protection that is our government's chief responsibility.**

**The work that our Office for Victims of Crime is doing is helping us to fulfill this critical responsibility – by strengthening ties between victim service programs and law enforcement agencies, by supporting communities that experience mass violence, and by widening the net of programs so that all victims have access to services.**

**First, we know that the safety of our homes and streets depends heavily on our nation's law enforcement officers. They are a bulwark between peaceful communities and the crime and destabilization that beset them. They are also vital to ensuring that victims get the help they need in the aftermath of crime. That's why OVC supports law enforcement in its work with victims, both by funding police-based victim services and by offering training and other resources designed to strengthen police and victim assistance partnerships.**

**Second, OVC continues to support robust responses to mass violence. Too many communities in recent years have experienced these tragedies, and all too often in places once considered safe, if not inviolable – movie theaters, night clubs, schools, even churches and mosques. Our nation’s victim service providers have been unflinching in their response, and OVC has consistently been part of that work.**

## **The Antiterrorism and Emergency**

**Assistance Program has been a mainstay of the federal response to mass victimization, offering compensation, crisis support, and other emergency and ongoing relief. I'm proud that one of my first duties as Acting Assistant Attorney General was to sign an \$8.5 million award to support victims and survivors of the Pulse night club shooting in Orlando. OVC also has an online toolkit on its website to help communities prepare for and respond to mass violence incidents.**

**Finally, we're working hard to make sure that all victims – no matter where they live or how they were victimized – have access to the support they need. For all the work that you at the state and local levels and we at the federal level have done to expand services, large gaps remain. There is, perhaps, no better reflection of this disparity between met and unmet needs than in Indian country.**

**American Indian and Alaska Native communities suffer some of the highest rates of victimization in the country. The remoteness of Indian lands, coupled with complex jurisdictional patterns and differences in cultural practices, frequently leave victims without even the most basic support. At OVC, and across the Office of Justice Programs, we are working to give service providers, law enforcement agencies, and others the resources to overcome these challenges and bring relief to victims in Indian country.**

**I see this work to support underserved victims, survivors of mass violence, and law enforcement-based victim assistance as central to our overall public safety mission at the Office of Justice Programs. These efforts are part of an ever-widening commitment to victims, covering services for sexual assault survivors, families of homicide victims, victims of elder abuse and human trafficking, and anyone who suffers as a result of a violent or unlawful act.**

**I believe that our job of protecting America's communities remains incomplete so long as victims fail to receive the help they need and the justice they deserve. There's a lot of work yet to be done, and the challenges of rising crime will not make our work any easier. But I feel confident that, thanks to the work that each of you is doing in your states, we have laid a solid foundation and are building a strong framework that will allow us to reach more victims and deliver better services.**

**We will, of course, continue to depend on your guidance and direction. Your insights, and the decisions you make on the state level, will determine whether we are maximizing our resources at the federal level. In short, we are only as good as the feedback we get from you. I encourage you – in fact, I urge you – to keep us grounded and focused. If you will promise to do that, we pledge to do our best to meet the needs that you identify.**

**On behalf of all of us at the Office of Justice Programs, I am grateful for the work you all do each and every day. You are giving hope to victims, and in the process you are making our country a safer and better place for all its citizens.**

**I am now pleased to introduce the new OVC Director, Darlene Hutchinson, on her second day in office. Darlene has been a crime victims' advocate for over 20 years, working extensively on legislation and public policy, teaching at police academies, and accompanying victims to court. She has more than 10 years of experience volunteering with rape crisis centers in Alabama and Texas, as well as seven years as president of a victims' support and advocacy group.**

**Simultaneously, Ms. Hutchinson worked for 25 years in publishing, including eight years as the editor of law enforcement publications in Alabama, Washington, D.C., and Texas. She also served for nearly six years as the Communications and Media Director for the Dallas Bar Association. Darlene also played a key role in the development of Alabama's innovative victim notification system and the passage and ratification of Alabama's Victims' Constitutional Amendment.**

**She has received many awards for her dedication to empowering survivors and protecting their rights, while enhancing public safety. Darlene is a native of St. Petersburg, Florida, and holds a bachelor's degree in Journalism from Troy State University. Please join me in welcoming OVC Director Darlene Hutchinson.**

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