

January 26, 1998

Dear Colleague:

During the week of April 19 to 25, 1998, our Nation will have the opportunity to honor those who serve crime victims. During the 18th commemoration of National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) we will celebrate the achievements of crime victim advocates and reflect upon the need to continue improving services and promoting victims' rights.

This year's theme, "**Victims' Rights: Right for America**," emphasizes that crime victims have specific legal rights and that guaranteeing the exercise of these rights benefits every citizen, of every race, creed, age, and income level, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or disability. Every community -- rural, urban, suburban, and Indian country is required by law to recognize and implement the legal rights of crime victims.

Through the courageous efforts of crime victims, service providers, criminal justice and allied professionals, and volunteers, crime victims have gained greater access and input throughout our justice system. Significant inroads also have been made in promoting community safety and increasing offender accountability through greater citizen involvement in justice-related issues.

In federal fiscal year 1998, \$363 million was collected for the Crime Victims' Fund (Fund) from fines, penalties, and forfeited bail bonds, paid by convicted federal offenders. This represents the second highest level in the history of the Fund. These funds, not taxpayer dollars, are used to support federal, state, and local programs that provide essential services for over 2 million crime victims each year. These funds support state victim compensation and assistance programs that provide crime victims with lifeline services in a time of need. They establish training and technical assistance programs that reach thousands of diverse professionals who serve crime victims, and provide services and technical assistance to victim service providers serving Native Americans. They also provide grants that develop "promising practices" to provide the field with crucial information about excellent strategies for improving victim services around the country.

During NCVRW, over 10,000 victim service and allied professional organizations will participate in public events designed to focus national attention on the needs and rights of individuals and communities hurt by crime. The staff of the Office for Victims of Crime and I salute the work that you do each year to observe victims' rights week. More importantly, we commend the important work that you do each day to ensure that victims' rights are observed.

I hope that this Resource Guide, which was developed by the Victims' Assistance Legal Organization with support from the Office for Victims of Crime, is helpful as you plan your state's commemorative activities. Let us hope that our combined efforts will honor crime victims and inspire their advocates.

Sincerely,

Reginald L. Robinson
Acting Director