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REMARKS

OF

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AT THE

NATIVE AMERICAN ISSUES SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
COLLABORATING WITH AUSA TRIBAL LIAISONS:
OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE RESOURCES TO THE DISTRICTS

ON

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I'm pleased to be here to talk about opportunities for collaboration between U.S. Attorney tribal liaisons and my agency – the Office of Justice Programs.

By way of background, I spent several years earlier in my career working in the U.S. Attorney's Office in D.C., both as an AUSA and as U.S. Attorney. Although there are some obvious differences between Washington and tribal communities, there's at least one big similarity: In D.C., the U.S. Attorney's Office serves as the local prosecutor – and your offices play a similar role in Indian country, at least with regard to crimes under the Major Crimes Act. In that sense, we probably have some experiences in common. And we certainly share a perspective on the important contributions U.S. Attorneys' Offices can make in strengthening the communities they serve.

The communities you work with face major resource challenges. And while it's the role of the federal prosecutor to investigate and prosecute crimes, there's also real merit in collaborating with tribal partners to support prevention and ensure that those who are prosecuted don't come back and re-victimize.

OJP's mission is to provide leadership to federal, state, local, and tribal justice systems by disseminating state-of-the-art knowledge and practices, and by providing funding, training, and other resources. As you know, most of the responsibility for crime control falls to local agencies and organizations, and in this instance, to tribal governments, which may in turn require federal direct service delivery, or they may contract services or operate under a Tribal Self-Governance Compact. We, of course offer justice and public safety services through competitive grants, training and technical assistance directly to the tribal governments. We also serve as the research, science, and statistical source for the American Indian and Alaska Native population.

The federal government can be effective only to the extent that it successfully partners with tribal governments. OJP doesn't directly carry out law enforcement and justice activities with tribal governments. Instead, we work in partnership with them to identify the most pressing crime-related challenges and provide assistance to address these challenges. It's important for all of us to know as much as we can about the overall resources available to support tribal justice and public safety systems, so we can help with comprehensive planning efforts on the ground that meet each tribe's needs.

When I first came to OJP back in the 90s, I immediately saw the value of close collaboration between OJP and U.S. Attorneys' Offices to meet local public safety needs. We've seen this partnership work well through efforts like Weed and Seed and Project Safe Neighborhoods. So we've already established a good, solid foundation for collaboration that I think will help us to better meet the needs of tribal governments.

I forwarded OJP's resource guide for tribes. I don't want to use my time to go through all the programs – you can read them and visit our Web site for more information – but I do want to highlight some overarching efforts we've undertaken to strengthen our outreach to tribes. I think it's important that all of you be aware of these efforts so you can enhance your own outreach to the tribal communities you serve.

First, we have a history in OJP of consulting with tribal leaders and tribal officials. Over the last several years, we've held many Tribal Justice, Safety, and Wellness Sessions to share information and provide a forum for consultation with tribes. We also participated in the Attorney General's tribal listening sessions three years ago. One of the messages we took away from those sessions was that the need for coordination remained great. In particular, we heard that tribes needed more flexibility to access our grant resources.

So in response, we created what we call the Consolidated Tribal Assistance Solicitation, or CTAS, which establishes a streamlined approach to make it easier for tribes to apply for funds. Basically, CTAS serves as a single application for our tribal-specific programs – and this includes not only my agency, but also the COPS Office and the Office on Violence Against Women. There are eight purpose areas: public safety and community policing, meth enforcement, justice systems and alcohol and substance abuse, corrections and correctional alternatives, violence against women, elder abuse, juvenile justice, and tribal youth programs.

We're constantly seeking input from tribes on how we can make CTAS responsive to tribal needs, and we've made a number of adjustments to address tribes' concerns and enhance flexibility.

Another major area of our work in recent years is through the Tribal Law and Order Act. We've worked closely with tribal leaders to fulfill our responsibilities under TLOA. We have a TLOA Interagency Programs Steering Committee that I established last year to coordinate OJP's efforts with other federal agencies. We've been able to do a number of things through this group. For example, we helped develop a Memorandum of Understanding on tribal substance abuse programs that was signed by the Attorney General and the Secretaries of HHS and Interior last year. We've also expanded our delinquency prevention efforts, and we've held three National Intertribal Youth Summits in partnership with the White House and other federal departments.

And in consultation with tribal leaders and tribal officials, we developed a Tribal Justice Plan focusing on alternatives to incarceration and reentry. This is, I think, a strong document that considers tribal corrections as an opportunity to reduce crime and rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders. It really looks at reducing recidivism by making maximum use of tribal assets.

We've also developed two major resources that I think have the potential to really benefit tribes. One is an online "what works" library of evidence-based programs called CrimeSolutions.gov. This is a database of more than 220 programs, covering all areas of the criminal and juvenile justice system. Each one is rated, either as effective, promising, or showing no effects. Tim Purdon tapped CrimeSolutions.gov to help with his Indian Country Community Prosecution Strategy. I understand he's working with tribal partners to implement a school-based prevention program they found on the site.

We're also piloting a program we call the OJP Diagnostic Center. This is a "one-stop" crime consultation service for state, local, and tribal policymakers who are looking to identify and implement evidence-based public safety strategies. The Center helps assess community strengths and challenges and match those with evidence-based interventions.

Since spring, we've been pilot testing the Center in a handful of communities in some very interesting engagements on a range of public safety topics. In fact, we have a proposal with one tribal community to work with a multi-disciplinary team to address child protection issues. In October, we'll be opening the doors to take on more clients across the country.

Finally, let me say a word or two about grant coordination. We now have a process that gives U.S. Attorneys the opportunity to weigh in on grant applications submitted from their districts. All U.S. Attorneys' Offices have identified two or three people who have full read access to our Grants Management System. I encourage you to find out who those people are in your offices and coordinate with them to provide feedback. You'll find guidance for providing input on the Executive Office of U.S. Attorneys Intranet site. Some U.S. Attorneys' Offices provided input to OJP on several grant applications this year. I think we received some 30 feedback forms cutting across all OJP offices and OVW.

We're also posting all award announcements on our Web site on a weekly basis, at ojp.gov. And we work with EOUSA to provide reports of the active grant funding in your districts. The next report is going out to all USAOs by mid-October.

OJP administers many programs and manages many grants, but we have limited staff and resources to travel out to the field, so we're not always able to develop the kinds of close relationships with tribes that we'd like. Your on-the-ground perspective can help us identify trends, concerns, and emerging issues that will help us tailor our programs and set priorities.

And, of course, your insights are critical in helping us identify innovative and effective practices that we can share with others. In fact, our Bureau of Justice Assistance is considering a pilot project to gather information about tribal funding, training, information, and other needs to find out how we can remove barriers to accessing resources.

I think we have a tremendous opportunity to work together to strengthen relationships between the Department and tribal communities. By coordinating our outreach, we can create a mechanism for problem-solving and linking resources.

For the remainder of the session, I'd be interested in hearing your thoughts and ideas about areas where we can improve our collaboration and ways we can institutionalize our partnership.

Thank you.

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