

REMARKS

OF

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

AT THE

**UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
80TH WINTER MEETING
CRIMINAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEETING**

ON

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 2012
WASHINGTON, DC**

Thank you, Mayor Parker. I'm just delighted to be here.

I want to thank all of you for the invitation to speak today and to share some thoughts on OJP's and the Justice Department's work with the nation's mayors, particularly in the area of youth violence. Before I do, though, I want to really applaud what you're doing to improve public safety in your cities. There is such innovation going on around the country – it's just exciting to hear about.

At the Department of Justice, we know protecting communities falls on your shoulders. Most crime, we know, is handled by local law enforcement, local prosecutors, and local judges, not to mention their local allies outside the justice system.

So your role in setting crime policy and directing public safety resources is really unique. No other government "CEO" has the kind of daily obligation to prevent and reduce crime that you do – not governors, not even the President. At the Department of Justice, we're proud to support your efforts – and I can tell you that the Attorney General and I continue to fight for critical funding for you through programs like JAG-Byrne and others – and I know Barney will talk in a moment about COPS funding.

And you also recognize that the issue of public safety can't be properly understood in isolation. Crime and violence so obviously affect education, housing, public health, and local economies, and that list could go on. That's why you know that taking a comprehensive approach is critical.

I know so many of you have been working actively to encourage partnerships in your communities – and we applaud your commitment here. As you know better than anyone, these continue to be tough times, and we need to make sure we're coordinating our efforts to make public safety dollars go further.

This comprehensive approach to fighting crime is one the Obama Administration and this Department of Justice are working hard to promote. And I'd like to take a little time today to highlight a few of our initiatives:

The centerpiece of our efforts to address youth violence is the National Forum for Youth Violence Prevention. It brings together groups across the spectrum – local and federal leaders, law enforcement, educators, public health providers, community and faith-based representatives, parents, and young people – to share ideas about effective and affordable ways to prevent youth and gang violence.

The Forum is built on three pillars – multidisciplinary partnerships, data-driven strategies, and a balanced approach that blends prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry. Six cities are participating – Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, and Salinas and San Jose, California – and they've all developed and are well into implementing their comprehensive violence prevention plans.

Just to give one example, in Detroit, Chief Godbee has engaged in a partnership with community and faith-based volunteers called the Safe Routes Initiative, designed to make sure kids get to and from school safely. He assigned 25 new officers hired under a COPS grant to this effort.

It's been exciting to see the level of support and enthusiasm the Forum has generated. We've had excellent participation from the sites, and terrific exchanges of information and ideas. And I should mention that we'll be selecting four more sites through a competitive process in the coming months. So I encourage you to consider applying.

Comprehensive initiatives require a balanced approach, always including enforcement but also making room for prevention. The Attorney General understands this, and a year-and-a-half ago he launched his Defending Childhood Initiative. Through that, we're treating children's early exposure to violence in an effort to prevent traumatic experiences from leading to a future of crime and other problems.

A comprehensive approach also means making public safety everyone's concern - especially the community's. Under our Community-Based Violence Prevention Demonstration Program - managed by our Juvenile Justice Office - we're supporting efforts that involve citizens in crime-fighting efforts.

This program supports federal, state, and local partnerships to replicate evidence-based strategies like the Chicago CeaseFire model. Oakland, Denver, Brooklyn, and Washington, D.C. are currently participating, and three new sites are being added this year - Newark, Boston, and Baltimore.

And we're working in other ways to support cities in their community safety efforts. Last summer we launched a new "what works" clearinghouse called CrimeSolutions.gov (that's the URL). This new Web site includes information on more than 160 criminal and juvenile justice programs, each rated for effectiveness. And I'm excited that this Spring, we'll be opening a companion Diagnostic Center to help mayors, policymakers, and other local leaders identify their public safety needs and implement these evidence-based strategies.

Finally, we're a central part of the Administration's Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative. This is a White House-led effort involving several federal agencies working to help transform neighborhoods of distress into neighborhoods of opportunity. We're working closely with the Department of Education, through its Promise Neighborhoods Program, and with HUD, through its Choice Neighborhoods Program.

Our own Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program complements those efforts by building on place-based strategies for addressing violence. We're also bringing our resources to bear through our Building Neighborhood Capacity Program. Through that, we're targeting areas that don't have the benefit of anchor institutions - like universities or hospitals - and that might be located far from economic engines and job sources.

Our goal is to help give those communities a chance to create opportunities for their residents. In the coming weeks, we'll be sending out an invitation to cities to participate.

So despite the challenges we're facing, we're still finding ways to address our public safety needs. And the fact that crime statistics are falling in many cities does reflect some progress.

For that, I credit your leadership. You've helped to drive the field toward a more collaborative, more data-driven, evidence-based approach to public safety. I applaud you for your commitment – and I encourage you to continue thinking comprehensively and continue relying on the evidence as you manage your public safety resources.

So thank you for your partnership, and thank you for all you do for America's communities.

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