

REMARKS

OF

**MARY LOU LEARY
ACTING ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS**

AT THE

**IDENTITY THEFT ASSISTANCE CENTER
CAPITOL HILL EVENT**

ON

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7, 2012
WASHINGTON, DC**

Thank you, Mike [Metzgar]. It's a pleasure to be here to celebrate this impressive milestone.

I want to begin by thanking the Members of Congress for sponsoring today's event and for their interest and leadership – including a former Member of Congress, Steve Bartlett, who continues to help lead the fight against identity theft. I also want to thank Mike, Anne, and all the staff of the Identity Theft Assistance Center for the tremendous work they do every day to protect Americans from identity theft crimes.

And I want to express my appreciation to the Federal Trade Commission and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service for being such terrific partners in this effort.

I'm glad we're taking time to reflect on the remarkable progress we've made – collectively – in combating what we all know is a serious problem. My agency's own Bureau of Justice Statistics tells us that in 2010, 8.6 million American households had at least one person 12 years or older who experienced identity theft. And as we talk to victims, we're hearing that the levels of distress they experience are comparable to those experienced by victims of interpersonal crimes like simple assault. Identity theft can be traumatic, even devastating.

As the former executive director of the National Center for Victims of Crime, I'm personally very proud of the work the Office of Justice Programs is doing to fight identity theft. I think we play a unique role in helping to prevent identity theft and aid its victims, and in training law enforcement and victim service professionals to respond appropriately.

I'm really pleased with what we've been able to accomplish. Our Office for Victims of Crime is funding the National Identity Theft Victims Assistance Network Project, which is run by the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center. And I want to acknowledge Russell Butler who's here today from the Center for his work to bring this project to fruition. Under this program, we've been able to fund 10 new identity theft coalitions around the country.

These programs are finding innovative ways to respond to a range of identity theft crimes. One group is exploring the link between identity theft and domestic violence. Another focuses on services to low-income victims. Yet another is training service providers to respond to victims' mental health needs. It's exciting to see these networks building and expanding in states and communities across the country.

It's also encouraging to see the tremendous collaboration we've enjoyed with our federal partners. Last summer, we worked with David and the FTC staff to co-host a forum on child identity theft, which was very successful. Anne and ITAC joined us in that effort.

We've also worked closely with the Postal Inspection Service to serve victims of mail fraud and identity theft – and other crimes. And I was pleased that the Attorney

General was able to recognize their important work a couple of years ago at the National Crime Victims' Rights Week Awards Ceremony. They really serve as a model for other federal agencies on how to meet the needs of victims – and I look forward to working with Jerry and continuing that relationship.

Our partnerships are expanding almost daily – to states, to communities, and to organizations across the country. The challenges posed by identity theft are many and complex, and it will take all of us, working together, to reduce the toll it takes on victims and their families. But through the leadership of ITAC and its many partners, we're making tremendous progress, and I'm confident that we'll find even more ways to stay ahead of perpetrators and give victims the support and services they need.

So congratulations, ITAC, on reaching 100,000 victims – and congratulations to all of you for making our collective response to identity theft a success.

Thank you.

###