

REMARKS

OF

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Thank you, Lisa. I'm thrilled to be here and honored to be asked to deliver one of the two keynote addresses of this conference.

I'm aware that I'm in esteemed company here, not only among the speakers and presenters, but among the hundreds of scholars, practitioners, and students participating in this annual meeting. Each of you is helping us advance towards a more sophisticated, knowledge-based criminal justice system, and this is a goal that we in the Office of Justice Programs and the Department of Justice share – from the staff level all the way up to the Attorney General.

I'm also glad to be joining my distinguished colleague, John Laub, the Director of our National Institute of Justice and a long-time Academy member. He'll be one of the presidential plenary speakers this afternoon. It's great to be here with him.

The fact that you're all interested in hearing from two federal representatives is, I think, a very positive sign of the times. The promise of a robust federal role in criminal justice research is a fairly old one, going back to President Johnson's Crime Commission. The Commission said the "greatest need" in criminal justice "is the need to know." Considering the resources allocated to federal criminal justice research over the last several decades, I think we've done a pretty good job helping advance the field. But I don't think the commitment to science – or the appreciation of its relevance to practice – has reached nearly the levels we could have hoped, until recently.

Criminal justice science is now receiving an unprecedented level of attention from the federal government. We can trace this new commitment back to President Obama's inaugural address, when he promised to "restore science to its rightful place." And speaking before the National Academy of Sciences just three months later, he made a specific point to establish the connection between science and safety.

The President's pledge to protect scientific integrity and expand the role of science has been matched by an Attorney General, in Eric Holder, who has used every opportunity to promote the work of researchers – by meeting with them to discuss ideas, by exhorting practitioners to use data and evidence, and by using his leadership as a fulcrum to advance an active research agenda.

Together, the President and the Attorney General have returned science to the public safety conversation. And they've done so in more than words. The President's budget for next year proposes a two-percent set-aside of OJP funds to be used for research, evaluation, and statistical purposes – not to mention a number of specific commitments to research and evidence-based programming – including funding increases for both NIJ and our Bureau of Justice Statistics. And speaking of NIJ and BJS, it's well worth noting that the President appointed two highly regarded scientists – in John Laub and Jim Lynch – to head those agencies.

For his part, the Attorney General appointed an 18-member Science Advisory Board – chaired by professor Al Blumstein – to guide OJP in our programmatic and

planning efforts. And I should point out that the Board's charter sets forth its role in improving the link between the academic and practitioner communities. This body is very much designed to facilitate the link between research and programs.

This interest in research and evidence-based approaches is not confined to the President and the Attorney General. The Deputy Attorney General and leaders throughout the Department of Justice share their desire to make our criminal justice system smarter and more effective, something they know can only be accomplished when we're willing to devote resources to research and science.

But what does this mean from a practical standpoint? How are we working to make this dream of a science-based justice system a reality?

Let me begin with our mission at the Office of Justice Programs, which is to increase public safety and improve the administration of justice. I think the only way to ensure we're positioned to achieve these goals is by working to expand our base of knowledge. After all, how do we know a program or approach is effective but through the evidence provided by research? But just as critical – and I believe one of our most important jobs at OJP – is to make evidence accessible.

Research is a complex enterprise, and answers don't always come in neat packages. What we need to be able to do is distill what we know from the abundant evidence available and get it out to those who can use it – the police chiefs and sheriffs, the prosecutors, the juvenile court judges, and the victim advocates – not to mention the legislators, the mayors, and the city council members who decide how scarce resources are allocated. In this tough economy – and in this era of growing public safety responsibilities – it's critical that we find a way to help our state and local partners adapt and use the knowledge that, for too long, has been sitting on shelves collecting dust.

Last summer, we took a huge step in the right direction when we launched a new Web site called CrimeSolutions.gov. This is the brainchild of Laurie Robinson, who many of you know was OJP's Assistant Attorney General until recently. Laurie had envisioned a "what works" clearinghouse that would include information on promising and effective programs that could be adapted by state and local practitioners. After more than two years of combing through the literature and sifting through the evidence, the site went live last June. Today, it includes some 175 criminal and juvenile justice programs, each one accompanied by a rating – effective, promising, or showing no effects. The number of programs continues to grow, and I've heard reports the site is being used to good effect in a number of jurisdictions.

And we're taking the next important step. This spring, to complement CrimeSolutions.gov, we're going to be launching something we call the OJP Diagnostic Center. This will be a "one-stop" crime consultation service for state, local, and tribal policymakers who are looking to identify and implement evidence-based public safety strategies. It will help assess community strengths and challenges, and match those with evidence-based interventions.

This is more than your typical training and technical assistance center. What we're trying to do with the Diagnostic Center is respond to broad-scope, system-changing types of requests. In other words, we're trying to address large, strategic challenges in a way that can really make a long-term difference in communities.

I'm excited about the Center and what it will mean for criminal justice professionals and policymakers. I think it represents a giant leap forward in our work to marry research with practice.

These two resources – which are part of an overall, OJP-wide effort called the Evidence Integration Initiative – reflect something I think is worth pointing out. And that is, our focus on science isn't limited to our two science bureaus – NIJ and BJS. This is a mindset we've embedded throughout the building.

Our Bureau of Justice Assistance – which provides funding to support a vast array of state and local criminal justice operations – emphasizes evidence-based approaches in all its programs, including its flagship program, Byrne-JAG. Since 2009 under Byrne-JAG, we've placed a strong focus on funding projects that rely on data-driven strategies and evidence-based approaches.

BJA also has a Smart Policing Initiative – now active in 28 sites – that pairs law enforcement with local universities to design research-driven responses to neighborhood public safety problems. For example, in Philadelphia, police are working with researchers at Temple University to test three different approaches in crime hot spots throughout the city. Similarly, BJA's Smart Probation Program – funded under the Second Chance Act – places an emphasis on reducing crime and recidivism through the collection and analysis of data. In both cases, research and data are driving these programs.

Our Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is also contributing significantly to the growing body of evidence about what works in juvenile justice, youth crime, and child safety. We supported the Pathways to Desistance Study, which provides important information about the differences in adult and juvenile offending – information that affirms the need to re-assess our juvenile justice policies. We also published findings from the first juvenile hot spots study, which found that all juvenile crime was committed in just a fraction of street segments.

And our *National Survey of Children Exposed to Violence* found that most kids – some 60 percent – are exposed to some form of violence, crime, or abuse, ranging from brief encounters as witnesses to serious violent episodes as victims. This study was a wake-up call, and it served as the impetus for the Attorney General's Defending Childhood Initiative – a Department-wide effort, centering on research, to improve our response to children exposed to violence.

It's clear that research has much to contribute to our criminal justice policies and practices – and when its value is accepted, it can be a game-changer. One needs to look no further for proof of this than the Justice Reinvestment movement we've helped support.

Many of you may be familiar with Justice Reinvestment. For those of you who aren't, it's an unprecedented bipartisan effort through which legislators and policymakers look at crime data in their states and determine how they can reallocate resources to both save money and reduce recidivism. This is – at its core – about finding sustainable ways to achieve public safety, and it represents a seismic shift in our philosophy of crime and justice.

My agency's Bureau of Justice Assistance, working with the Council of State Governments Justice Center, the Pew Center on the States, and other groups, is supporting several Justice Reinvestment efforts. To take one example, the Kentucky General Assembly enacted legislation, based on a Justice Reinvestment analysis, that reserves prison beds for the most serious offenders and re-focuses resources on community supervision and evidence-based programs.

The state is projected to reduce its prison population by more than 3,000 inmates over the next 10 years and save some \$422 million as a result of the new law. That would be an extraordinary turn of events for a state with one of the fastest growing prison populations and prison budgets in the entire nation. And this is just one example of how policymakers have shown a willingness to make use of the evidence, something that has frequently been missing in the often overheated public debates about crime.

Corrections is an area in which research can offer solutions to some of our most urgent criminal justice problems. Our nation is burdened with an economically draining, administratively unsustainable, and morally insupportable system of incarceration. It's one of the costliest items in any state budget, but more importantly, it fails – in far too many cases – to deter future offending and protect public safety.

To put it simply, we've depended on incarceration as a cure-all for our crime problems, but it's come up too short too often. It's in both our fiscal and public safety interests to find alternative ways of dealing with offenders.

The good news is there are examples of effective approaches that depart from this trend. Drug courts have been used in many communities to great success – showing reductions in both substance abuse and recidivism.

Another example is the HOPE program pioneered by circuit judge Steven Alm in Honolulu. HOPE is a probation-based program that applies immediate, predictable, and proportionate sanctions to probation violators – in contrast to the delayed and uneven regimen of punishments that characterize most sanctioning systems. Research has shown remarkable success rates among participants, including significantly lower rates of re-arrest, drug use, and probation revocations.

What HOPE has shown is that swiftness and certainty of punishment matter much more than severity. John's office is supporting further studies to determine the extent to which this model can be replicated in other jurisdictions – and we're eagerly anticipating those findings – but the results we have in hand now show tremendous promise.

By paying attention to the research and finding ways to make it relevant to our policies and practices, we have the potential to transform our corrections and all our criminal and juvenile justice institutions into a collective force for positive change. This will, of course, mean altering the way we do business. It means that practitioners and policymakers will need to accept that research can – and should – shape their work. And it means that researchers must take into account the very practical needs of practitioners and policymakers when designing their research agendas. In short, it means these groups must talk to one another, listen to one another, and work together to find solutions.

We've seen this happen in pockets – and we've seen it work. We need to make it standard practice. We need to set our sights on creating a knowledge-based justice system that uses evidence to achieve the ultimate goal of greater community safety. It's a tall order – and it won't happen overnight – but the commitment is there – as each of you has shown.

We're on the right path. Smart and sustainable justice is within reach. Let's keep the momentum going, working with each other, relying on each other, and – ultimately – succeeding together.

Thank you.

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