

REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY GENERAL TOM PERRELLI AT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH EVENT

Washington, D.C.

Good afternoon, I invite you all to stand for the playing of the National Anthem.

[National Anthem plays]

Thank you. I am Associate Attorney General Tom Perrelli and I want to welcome you today as we honor Domestic Violence Awareness Month. As part of my job, I oversee our grant making programs for state, local and tribal law enforcement. That includes the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), which administers critical funding to victim service providers and programs across the country. I am honored to stand here with the leadership of this Department to shine a spotlight on the critical issue of violence against women. This is an issue I personally care deeply about, and it is one of the many areas where I believe that we are at a critical point to make a real and significant difference.

Last month marked the 15 year anniversary of President Clinton signing the Violence Against Women Act – or VAWA – into law. In the coming year, we will celebrate the passage of VAWA and will commemorate the strides we have taken since then. But this year cannot just be an anniversary – it must be a call to action, and that is how we at the Department of Justice are viewing it. We at the Department have planned a year’s worth of activities meant to raise public awareness, to make sure that survivors everywhere know that they have a place – and a voice – in this administration, and to build toward a future where domestic abuse and sexual assault are eradicated. In fact, our musical guest today, Marcus Johnson, is one of several celebrities who have “Joined the List,” a growing list of public figures who are standing with the Department to end violence against women. Marcus is among some famous people who have lent their names to this effort, including Mariska Hargitay, John Lithgow, Wynton Marsalis, Faith Hill, Kyra Sedgwick, Omar Epps, Meryl Streep, Kevin Spacey, Ellen DeGeneres, Eva Mendes, Scarlett Johansson and Los Angeles Dodgers Manager Joe Torre.

I’d also like to recognize Olympic gold medalist Dominique Dawes, who is in the audience today, and also a member of the “List.” Dominique, will you please stand?

We will mark this year with our renewed dedication. We want to use this year not merely to commemorate an anniversary, but to recommit ourselves to ending domestic and sexual violence. Our government and this Department have a responsibility to speak out and act on issues of violence against women. Far too many communities in the United States and around the world are affected by this issue and it must stop. We are committed to this cause and will work with state, local and tribal partners to ensure that all communities – particularly those that have been chronically neglected – are given the resources and support they need.

The domestic violence community has no greater ally than our Attorney General, who has committed himself, and this Department, to ending violence against women and providing the resources needed to our law enforcement partners and service providers. Ladies and gentleman, I am honored to introduce Attorney General Eric Holder.

[Remarks by Attorney General Eric Holder]

Thank you Mr. Attorney General. I have traveled throughout the country delivering remarks about violence against women to advocates, members of Congress and our own U.S. Attorneys' offices, and I can tell you how energized people feel, not only about this issue but about your passion for ending this epidemic.

Now, I'd like to invite my good friend Deputy Attorney General David W. Ogden to the podium, whose focus on restoring public safety in Indian Country and especially on ending violence against Native women is well known to many of you.

[Remarks by Deputy Attorney General David W. Ogden]

Thank you Deputy Attorney General Ogden. I have been honored to work with you as we fight to restore justice to Indian Country. We know that domestic and sexual violence is a devastating problem in Indian Country, and I know I speak for all of us when I say that ending the violence and bringing assailants to justice is a top priority.

While we recognize the 15 year anniversary of the signing of VAWA, the Department is also noting the 15 year anniversary of the creation of our Office on Violence Against Women (OVW). I know that we have many OVW partners and grantees in the audience today. Without a doubt, VAWA never would have happened, from creation to passage, without the steadfast commitment and work of the countless advocates, coalitions and community partners who advocated tirelessly for federal legislation to mark the importance of this issue and to back it up with vital resources. Many of you are here, and I applaud you for your work then and now to keep the momentum going.

Catherine Pierce is no stranger to you. And to those of you in the field, I don't have to tell you what an asset she is to the domestic violence and sexual assault community. But she is also an incredible asset within the Department, and has brought to OVW her dedication not just to ending violence against women, but to bringing together the best minds and the greatest available resources for victims' services. I am proud to introduce Catherine Pierce, Acting Director of the Office on Violence Against Women.

[Remarks by Acting Director of the Office on Violence Against Women Catherine Pierce, presentation by advocates and musical performance by Marcus Johnson]

Thank you Marcus. And I want to thank our presenters as well for sharing their stories and insights about the impact of VAWA and how we at the Department can make a difference. But I think these comments also highlight a bigger challenge for us. Because we must do better – and we must do this work together. We must involve our federal, state, local and tribal partners as well as individual communities. Domestic and sexual violence are not just an issue for the victim, or his or her family. Communities must be involved in addressing the needs of survivors and holding offenders accountable. It cannot be the work of the Department of Justice alone, or the criminal justice system, or state government. Each community must take an active role in defining their response to domestic violence and sexual assault. Communities must do a

better job of educating themselves about the motives behind domestic and sexual violence, the prevalence of rape, the need for services and support to victims, and the necessary criminal justice response to these crimes.

Similarly, as communities look to strengthen their partnerships, the Department must also look to strengthen our partnerships with federal agencies and others. We know that only by working together and coordinating within the federal family, can we truly make a change across the country. As we look forward to commemorating the 15th anniversary of the Violence Against Women Act with our partners, there is no better time to renew our commitments and strengthen our partnerships – with one another, and with our federal leaders and representatives.

We at the Department share a vision where men, women, boys, girls and communities can live in a world without the fear of domestic and sexual violence. Listening to the complex needs of the communities, and recognizing their unique responses, is perhaps the most important thing we can do.

Whether you are in the audience or watching us on Justice TV, I am calling on Department staff to get engaged in this effort. Wear a ribbon, put up a poster, but more importantly, start a conversation. Know that there are resources for you as well as people who may come to you for help through OVW. Start to think about how programs and messages to end violence against women might be relevant to your component. Get involved and let us know how we can include your office in this work. If we're going to do this, we are going to have to do it together. We stand here today committed to ending violence against women – and we invite you to stand with us.