

REMARKS

OF

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AT THE

SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

ON

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WASHINGTON, DC

Thank you, Al [Blumstein]. Good morning.

It's great to be back before the Board. My thanks to Al for his continued leadership, and to all the Board and subcommittee members for your ongoing contributions. I'm tremendously grateful for your time and expertise and am looking forward to continuing our engagement.

This is the first meeting of the Science Advisory Board since the election. It's also the first since the departure of John Laub and Jim Lynch, who have returned to academia and will be greatly missed by all of us. So I thought this would be a good opportunity – at this moment of change and new beginnings – to re-affirm OJP's and the Department's support of science, research, and evidence-based practices and to think about our collective role in ensuring scientific integrity.

Let me begin by saying that OJP – and I personally – remain strongly committed to our scientific mission. Over the last four years, we've generated tremendous momentum in our work to integrate evidence into our programs and activities. Our leadership – not only at BJS and NIJ, but across OJP – has demonstrated a strong scientific ethic. We're consistently looking at research to guide program development in juvenile justice, victim services, reentry, recidivism, and many other issues in the domain of our Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office for Victims of Crime, and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Our Evidence Integration Initiative also continues to build steam. Its two principal components – CrimeSolutions.gov and the OJP Diagnostic Center – are expanding their efforts. CrimeSolutions.gov now has more than 240 programs in its database, up significantly from the last time we met. And the Diagnostic Center is now engaged with six jurisdictions, working to address complex public safety problems at each of the sites.

The Department and the Administration are firmly behind our scientific and evidence-based work, as well. At the last meeting, we circulated a draft of the Department's Scientific and Research Integrity Policy, which – as I mentioned then – is a strong indicator of the value of science to DOJ's work. I think it clearly reflects the principles of quality, transparency, and integrity that this body stands for.

We also discussed the guidance from the Office of Management and Budget on the use of evidence and evaluation in the federal budget process. This is another emphatic statement from the Administration about the value it places on scientific evidence, to go along with the budget set-asides for research and evaluation and the President's appointments to the BJS and NIJ leadership posts – and I look forward to continuing our discussions about candidates to replace Jim and John. Fortunately, both BJS and NIJ have strong scientific leadership teams, and I know Bill Sabol and Greg Ridgeway will continue moving us ahead.

So we've established, I think, a good recent record of accomplishments, and we've done a great deal already to establish a focus on scientific principles in OJP. So here we are, at the beginning of a new term, with the opportunity to expand on that record and to work toward really embedding an evidence-based mindset in the work we do at the Department of Justice.

How do we do that? And more to our purpose, how can you – the Science Advisory Board – help us achieve that goal?

For one thing, I hope you will give a good deal of thought to how we can draw on your expertise to strengthen our own operations. A central theme of the National Research Council's report on strengthening NIJ was the need for ongoing – and deep – self-assessment. I'd like to see this as a practice across OJP. I know NIJ started yesterday relying on the NIJ subcommittee for program reviews as a way of ensuring quality and integrity in programmatic activities, and the BJS subcommittee is providing input specific to the National Crime Victimization Survey and BJS's National Crime Statistics Exchange initiative. I think these are excellent ways for the Board to be engaged with OJP, and I'd like to see us expand that approach.

I've also asked OJP leadership for their input as to how the Science Advisory Board can best inform their work. They identified three specific areas in which we could benefit from your guidance – data archiving, human subjects protection, and research training. Later this afternoon, Thom Feucht from NIJ will discuss ways we see the Board as possibly helping us address these issues.

I'd also be interested in a robust discussion of how we can build our institutional research capability. In other words, how do we establish a mechanism for responding to the big research questions of the day in a way that improves policy and maintains the integrity of the research function? Are there changes we need to consider that will make OJP more effective in delivering its scientific products to policymakers and practitioners?

And finally, how do we promote and ensure a culture of science in OJP and the Department? If a scientific mentality is to permeate OJP – if we really hope to encode scientific thinking in OJP's DNA – how do we envision that in light of the many grant-making and non-science-related tasks OJP is expected to perform? In other words, how do we manage the cross-over between technical knowledge and administrative function? What is our expectation of staff-level proficiency within the agency?

These are just a few of the questions and challenges I see for the Board as we begin this next term of the Administration. We've already taken a number of steps to address these issues, and I know your deliberations have touched on many of these questions. I hope you will continue to develop your ideas on these fronts and help guide us forward.

Again, I want to say grateful I am for the work you are doing, both through the various subcommittees and as part of the larger Advisory Board. Your guidance remains

critical to helping OJP become the most knowledge-based – and the most effective – agency it can possibly be.

I want to turn things over now to my esteemed colleagues in BJS and NIJ, Bill Sabol and Greg Ridgeway. Many of you know Bill – and have cited his work. He’s a long-time member of BJS, overseeing its statistical programs, and is currently serving as its Acting Director. Greg came to us relatively recently from the Rand Corporation, where he was director of the Safety and Justice Research Program and the Center on Quality Policing. He’s now serving as NIJ’s Acting Director. As I mentioned earlier, they’re both very committed to continuing Jim and John’s work, and I know we’ll be able to count on them to keep us on the right path. I’d like to give them the opportunity to say a few words. Bill and Greg. . . .

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