

REMARKS

OF

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ACTING ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK
AWARDS CEREMONY

ON

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WASHINGTON, DC

Thank you, Joye – and welcome, everyone, to the Office of Justice Programs. We're delighted to bring you all to our building to honor our 2013 National Crime Victims' Rights Week awardees.

I'm thrilled to have the Attorney General and the Acting Associate Attorney General with us once again. And I have to say how fortunate I feel to have these two men leading the Department of Justice. Eric Holder has never missed this ceremony during his tenure as Attorney General, and in the 13 months he's been in his position, Tony West has been here to show his support twice now. It's clear the victims' field has the support of this Justice Department.

I'm also delighted to have Congressman Barber joining us today. It's wonderful to have you with us, Congressman.

Let me echo Joye's words of thanks to Kim Kelberg, Heidi Fam, and the OVC team for all their hard work in organizing this ceremony. They've done an outstanding job, as usual.

And, of course, I want to thank Joye for her leadership. She's truly a visionary and an asset both to OJP and to the victims' field.

And finally, let me offer my congratulations to this amazing group of awardees. They've done such extraordinary things, and it's an honor to recognize them here today.

Much of my career has been spent working with and on behalf of victims – as a prosecutor, as head of a national victims organization, and in leadership here at the Department of Justice. Yet I continue to be struck by the level of energy and dedication victim advocates show in their work. The late hours, the endless stream of new ideas about how to better serve victims, the way they allow their work to become their lives. It's a kind of passion you don't come across frequently.

This passion – this commitment – should be celebrated, but it should also be supported. OVC is working hard every day to make sure that victim service providers have the resources they need to do their jobs. Our Attorney General and our Acting Associate Attorney General are leading the Department's efforts to reach underserved groups like children, Native Americans, and victims of human trafficking. And our President is calling for more federal funding to support the work of victim advocates.

We're doubling down on our support for victims because the challenges they and their advocates face continue to be significant, and they're growing. The theme of this year's National Crime Victims' Rights Week – “New Challenges. New Solutions.” – reflects that the landscape of crime and victimization is changing. Crime has become more globalized, more mechanized, and – in cases like human trafficking and cybercrime – more difficult to detect. But our theme also suggests there are answers to these challenges.

This morning, Joye and I were privileged to join Senator Leahy on Capitol Hill to announce the release the framework for *Vision 21: Transforming Victim Services*. This is the culmination of three years of hard work by OVC and its partners – meeting with victims, advocates, and other experts; combing through the research; scouring the field for ideas – all to come up with a comprehensive plan to meet these emerging challenges, as well as those enduring challenges that have always been part of our work.

The framework identifies ways we can strategize more effectively, expand our capabilities, leverage technology, and use research to improve our response. It's a bold plan to really change the way we think about serving victims, and I just want to thank Joye for leading this effort and seeing it through. It was truly a labor of love on her part. And I also want to thank her terrific team, especially Meg Morrow, for their hard work and sustained commitment to this project. I think this really will be a transformative document that will make the field stronger.

I'm excited about where we stand today. Yes, our work has become, in many ways, more difficult. But the challenges we face have caused us to think creatively and spurred us to find new and better ways to reach those we serve.

But one thing won't and shouldn't change, and that's the passion and the determined spirit behind the work you all do. That spirit is what has brought about such profound changes in our nation's approach to crime and justice. It's that spirit that's given us thousands of victim service programs and thousands of victims' rights laws throughout the country – something that would have been hard to imagine three decades ago, when National Crime Victims' Rights Week was first proclaimed.

I'm proud of the work that's been accomplished. I'm proud of the role the Department of Justice has played in that work. And I'm proud to count each and every one of you as partners.

Thank you for all you do.

It's now my pleasure to introduce our next speaker.

In the two years he's served as Acting Associate Attorney General, Tony West has been a stalwart supporter of the Office of Justice Programs and the Office for Victims of Crime. He believes strongly in a balanced justice system that recognizes victims and respects their rights. He's both a partner and a friend of the victims' field, and I'm delighted he could join us today.

Please welcome Acting Associate Attorney General Tony West.

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