

REMARKS

OF

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OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

VISION 21 ROLL-OUT

ON

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Thank you, Senator Leahy. On behalf of the Office of Justice Programs and the Department of Justice, let me say how grateful I am to you and your staff for hosting this event – and for your strong and consistent support over the years for crime victims. This event is another example of your tremendous advocacy on behalf of victims, to go along with your incredible work leading the recent Violence Against Women Act reauthorization, which was an enormous victory for domestic and sexual abuse victims. We are lucky at the Department of Justice to have such a friend in Congress.

I'm very pleased to see so many friends and supporters in the audience. We've worked long and hard on this initiative. Many of you were involved, in some way, and I'm delighted to share its framework with you today.

I want to begin by thanking the architect of the Vision 21 Initiative, OVC's Principal Deputy Director, Joye Frost. Joye has put her heart and soul into this effort. Day after day for the last three years, she's labored tirelessly to capture a vision of victim services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to create a framework for the field. This is the culmination and synthesis of countless hours of hard work and deep thought on her part, and I just want to say "thank you, Joye," for everything you've put into it.

Of course, her staff and OVC's partners have been instrumental in bringing this report to fruition, and I want to single out one person – Meg Morrow – who's done yeoman's work to help make this vision a reality. Thank you, Meg, and thank you to everyone involved in this extraordinary project.

I'm very excited about today's release. Not only does it cap three years of fact-finding, intensive exploration, and hard work; it also marks only the second time in the history of the victims' field that such a comprehensive analysis has been undertaken, and it's the first time in some 15 years. The landscape of crime and victimization has changed dramatically in those 15 years, and it was time for a re-appraisal.

As many of you know, this issue is personal for me. During my years as a local and federal prosecutor – including my time as U.S. Attorney here in Washington – I saw that justice depended on giving victims a voice. And I've always been guided by that philosophy, in earlier leadership positions at the Department of Justice, as head of the National Center for Victims of Crime, and now as Acting Assistant Attorney General. One of my top priorities leading the Office of Justice Programs has been to advance the Department's critical work of protecting and supporting victims of crime. I believe Vision 21 is a huge step forward, and one that couldn't have come at a better time.

Victim service providers are faced with a host of emerging and difficult issues, but also with a number of enduring challenges, including that most fundamental challenge: reaching the many victims who need services. For instance, you may be surprised to know that, according to our own Bureau of Justice Statistics, almost half of violent crime victims never report to police.

So there's still much more we need to do, at every level. The goal of Vision 21 is to create a framework to address these enduring and emerging challenges – in short, to re-define the role of victim services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As ambitious as that sounds, I think we've done that here. We're recommending specific actions that service providers, criminal justice professionals, policymakers, and others can take to meet the challenges. These actions boil down to four categories:

- First, the need for continuous strategic planning that focuses on coordinating and linking services across disciplines and levels of government. This planning should be based on rigorous evaluation, and it should consider how to diversify funding to ensure a continuum of services. The focus should be on maximizing limited resources and sustaining programs.
- Second, the need for research and data to pinpoint victimization trends. We've accumulated a good deal of knowledge about crime and victimization over the years, but we need to know more about the impact of victimization and what services are most effective.
- Third, the victims' field needs greater flexibility and support from policymakers, decisionmakers, and legislators. We're fortunate to have allies like Senator Leahy, who works hard to protect victims and to ensure a strong and fair justice system. Victims and their advocates need the same support from legislators and state and local leaders across the country.
- Finally, the victims' field needs the opportunity to build its capacity. We heard from stakeholders that victim assistance should be as universal as law enforcement. That's an ambitious goal, but I believe it's definitely one worth aiming for. We do, in fact, need to work to make victim services part of our criminal justice and human services infrastructure. In particular, we need to take advantage of technologies that are already being tested and used in pockets across America.

These recommendations cover every aspect of victim services, and they come directly from the field. The discussions that formed the basis for Vision 21 underscore that only a comprehensive, far-ranging effort – one that involves everyone in the victim services field – will lead to the fundamental change we need to see.

It's important to remember, too, that we're not starting from scratch. Many organizations and communities have already begun making the kinds of changes we envision. We've identified a number of these efforts as what we're calling "Vision 21 Beacons," examples of innovative programs and practices that light the way ahead for the victims' field.

Vision 21 has the full support of the Department and Administration. I'm very pleased that the President's budget request to Congress for Fiscal Year 2014 includes not

only a \$95 million dollar increase in the cap on the Crime Victims Fund, but \$45 million dollars to implement Vision 21. And I'm so encouraged by the interest that Senator Leahy has shown. I look forward to working with him to make the ideas behind Vision 21 a reality.

The recommendations we're releasing today are the culmination of three years of work, but it's also just the first step in what will be a long and rewarding journey. I look forward to making this journey together, with all of you and with our partners across the country.

Thank you.

Now, it's my pleasure to turn things over to my colleague and friend – and the motive force behind Vision 21 – Principal Deputy Director of the Office for Victims of Crime, Joye Frost.

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