

REMARKS

OF

THE HONORABLE KAROL V. MASON  
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL  
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS  
SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

ON

FRIDAY, JANUARY 10, 2014  
WASHINGTON, DC

Thank you, Dr. Blumstein. I'm very pleased to be here and thrilled to have this opportunity to interact with all of you.

I was very much looking forward to meeting with all of you in early October, but as we all know, that meeting had to be canceled due to the government shutdown.

In fact, it's been a full year since this Board last met. Our June meeting also had to be canceled for reasons related to the budget battles that have been playing out in Washington. Even as we rescheduled this meeting, I pressed to make sure we were scheduled before January 15<sup>th</sup> because that was when the previous continuing resolution ran out.

Thankfully, the President signed a bipartisan budget compromise bill that reduces the risk of another government shutdown, at least for the next year or so. So hopefully now we can put all of that behind us and get to the important work that I know we're all anxious to be doing.

Let me begin by thanking Dr. Blumstein for his terrific leadership. I think it really speaks to the importance of science to the Department of Justice – and to this Administration – that the Attorney General appointed someone of his caliber and reputation to chair the Science Advisory Board. I know this is something he's very passionate about, and I'm grateful for his continued service.

And I'm humbled by the wealth of knowledge and experience represented by everyone on the Board. All of us at the Department of Justice, up through the highest ranks, view you as indispensable to the work we're trying to achieve in creating the fairest and most effective justice system possible. So thank you all for your contributions.

Since this is my first Board meeting, it's probably appropriate that I say a little about myself and, particularly, my interest in the scientific mission of the Office of Justice Programs.

Earlier in the Administration, I served as the Deputy Associate Attorney General under Tom Perrelli, the Associate Attorney General at the time. While I was there, I was fortunate to help lead the Defending Childhood Initiative, which involved creating the Attorney General's Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence.

I was struck by the importance of the research being done in this area – in developmental psychology and neuroscience. This is just one example of an area where we're working very hard to bring the value of research to practice in criminal and juvenile justice.

I was in the Associate's office in 2010 when my predecessor, Laurie Robinson, proposed the creation of the OJP Science Advisory Board. I was happy to support the idea then, and I'm even more excited to have the opportunity to work with you now.

When I was appointed Assistant Attorney General, I resolved to continue what Laurie and Mary Lou Leary had begun, which was to create a culture of science at OJP, and to build on a strong recent tradition of relying on research to strengthen our criminal and juvenile justice systems. This is one of my top priorities as Assistant Attorney General, and it continues to be a very high priority for the Department of Justice and this Administration.

In fact, two of the first moves I made when I became Assistant Attorney General were to establish the OJP Research Coordinating Council – which you’ll hear about later today – and to designate Dr. Phelan Wyrick to be my Science Policy Advisor. And of course, part of his role is to serve as the Designated Federal Officer for this Board.

In November, I attended the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology in my hometown of Atlanta. I was able to hear directly from criminologists and other researchers about their interests and concerns as they relate to the science mission at OJP.

It was so gratifying to see such a large OJP footprint at the conference. OJP directly sponsored dozens of papers and panels. And many more were made possible with OJP funding.

But I was most proud that so many members of the OJP senior leadership team were able to attend the conference. As many of you know, travel and conference attendance have become difficult issues for many in the federal government. But the Department was very supportive of our efforts to send a sizable contingent of more than 30 OJP employees to ASC, including the Directors and Acting Directors of our National Institute of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, and Bureau of Justice Assistance, and senior officials from our Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and Office for Victims of Crime.

I believe that kind of participation in meetings like this helps the field and OJP in so many ways.

Let me just wind up by emphasizing how vital the Science Advisory Board is to the mission, not just of OJP, but to the entire Department of Justice. Our work together is a way to help us reflect on what we’re doing, share our challenges, and hear from the experts about how we can continue to improve. I’m eager to hear more from you about how we can best focus our energies to advance the science mission at OJP and in the field.

Once again – and I speak for all OJP when I say this – I’m very grateful to be able to benefit from the wisdom and expertise of this distinguished group, and I look forward to our continued collaboration. Thank you all for your time and for your service.

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