

REMARKS

OF

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OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS MEMORIAL FUND
AWARDS DINNER

ON

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WASHINGTON, DC

Thank you, Barbara [Hallbach]. It's a pleasure to be here, and a privilege to help honor these outstanding award recipients. I'd like to thank Craig [Floyd] for inviting me, and for all the great work his organization does. The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund and the Office of Justice Programs share a critical mission – to support the brave and dedicated officers who enforce our laws and protect our communities. I'm proud to stand with him, and with all of you.

I was honored last evening to join Craig and my boss – Attorney General Sessions – at the law enforcement candlelight vigil. I had the extraordinary opportunity to read the names of fallen officers from the state of Tennessee. It was my first time taking part in this ceremony, and I was deeply moved. Hearing the names of men and women who've laid their lives on the line was a powerful, and sobering, experience.

For me, as the head of an agency whose mission is to support law enforcement, it was especially poignant. I spend my days making decisions about programs that affect police and the criminal justice system – programs like the Bulletproof Vest Partnership, the Byrne Justice Assistance Grants Program, and the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program.

Along with the Justice Department's COPS Office, we are the primary source of federal support for state, local, and tribal law enforcement. We award millions of dollars every year to help police and sheriffs' departments buy operational equipment, purchase body armor, and get the training and information their officers need to do their jobs and, importantly, be safe.

We understand that our work affects law enforcement in very important ways. But we don't often get to see the impact first hand. Last night's vigil brought home to me that the work we do touches lives. Reading those names, and recalling the sacrifice made by so many officers, reaffirmed my commitment to our nation's law enforcement community.

Already, under the direction of the Attorney General, we are taking steps to make sure that the full weight of the Justice Department is behind the work of our officers. One of Jeff Sessions' earliest actions was to create a task force on crime reduction and public safety. The goal is to identify effective public safety approaches and determine how we get federal resources into the hands of our state, local, and tribal partners. One of its activities is a National Summit on Crime Reduction and Public Safety that the Department of Justice will host at the end of June. We hope to learn about local strategies that work and map out a plan for supporting those efforts.

The Attorney General is also taking action to respond to the President's executive order on preventing violence against law enforcement. Policing our communities is a dangerous and demanding job – and it seems to become even more dangerous and demanding every year. Officer safety is a critical element of our mission at OJP, and we're looking at ways we can expand this part of our portfolio, because we understand

that keeping officers safe, protecting their health, and sustaining their morale are vital to community safety.

So we're doubling down on our efforts to support the law enforcement community. We're providing bullet- and stab-resistant body armor to thousands of police and sheriff's departments each year. Through our Body Armor Compliance Testing Program, we're holding protective equipment up to the highest industry standards, so that officers have the best that's available.

Our National Institute of Justice is leading research projects on officer wellness, studying issues like roadside safety and the impact of stress and fatigue on officer well-being and performance.

Our Bureau of Justice Statistics is a constant and reliable source of data on topics like equipment and technology, use-of-force, and hiring and training – information that can help agencies better support their officers.

Our Bureau of Justice Assistance is keeping officer skills at the cutting edge through its vast index of training opportunities. The VALOR training program helps prevent violent encounters and build resilience, and the Blue Courage program has reached almost 70,000 officers, helping to sustain their commitment to the profession and supporting their development as leaders.

We're also deeply concerned about the emotional toll that routine exposure to violence can take on an officer's psyche. Our Office for Victims of Crime put together a toolkit that addresses the vicarious trauma that law enforcement and other first responders experience when they are called to crime scenes.

Our work goes even beyond safety, wellness, and training. We're giving officers the tools and insights they need when they encounter vulnerable groups, like victims and children. Our Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the International Association of Chiefs of Police just developed a toolkit to help law enforcement meet the needs of kids who have been exposed to violence. And our SMART Office is building the infrastructure to help law enforcement protect their communities from sex offenders.

These are all resources that OJP is proud to make available to our partners, because supporting our nation's officers is a cornerstone of our mission. If we have failed in that, we have failed as an agency. We know that we ask a great deal of our law enforcement officers. The roll call of names at last night's vigil is a grave reminder of the demands made on them and on their families.

We expect much from them, and they almost uniformly and universally rise to meet, and exceed, those expectations. They deserve to know that we, in turn, are giving them the best that we have to offer. That's the marker I've set for the Office of Justice

Programs, and it's a goal our Attorney General and this Administration are working hard to achieve.

I feel very fortunate to go to my job every day knowing that I'm working on behalf of the brave men and women who protect our communities. I know that the job of the law enforcement officer is performed under extraordinary pressure and frequently in very difficult and dangerous conditions – and often at great personal cost. We owe a debt to all our officers, one that we at OJP are trying to pay down through the many resources we make available.

I'm proud of the work we do, but most of all, I'm proud to stand with you, our nation's law enforcement community. You are professionals of the highest order. You are heroes. It is an honor to serve you, as you have so faithfully served us. We are stronger as a nation because of you, and the Office of Justice Programs will continue fighting on your behalf.

Thank you.

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