

REMARKS

OF

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AT THE

POLICE WEEK CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING

ON

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WASHINGTON, DC

Good morning. I want to thank everyone for joining us today. I'm delighted to see this terrific turnout. As a long-time Hill staff member myself, I feel like I'm back home. I'd like to thank the Law Enforcement Caucus and its co-chairs, Congressman Dave Reichert and Congressman Bill Pascrell Jr., for hosting us, and for working closely with OJP staff and the COPS Office to organize today's event. And I want to recognize OJP's own Office of Communications for their efforts in putting this together.

Joining me today is Russ Washington, Acting Director for the Justice Department's COPS Office. You will hear from Russ shortly. As you can see, I'm also here with a number of our agency's leadership and staff. We're all here to tell you about the work we do and to show you why that work is so critical to our nation's law enforcement community and, ultimately, the safety of our communities.

In a moment, we'll give you an opportunity to ask us some questions. The remainder of our time will be an open house for you to talk directly with our subject matter experts.

Rather than give you a broad overview of OJP's mission and activities, which span the full range of the criminal and juvenile justice systems, we thought it would be useful to focus on the area of law enforcement, which we know is of particular interest to you. You are probably aware that this is National Police Week, when officers from across the nation come together here in Washington, DC, to honor those who have fallen in the line of duty. So the timing is quite appropriate.

OJP serves law enforcement by providing tools, technology, training, and resources, based on solid science and research. The over-riding objective is to increase the effectiveness of law enforcement in promoting and protecting public safety.

A large area of our involvement is officer safety. As you know, this is a top priority of the President, who earlier this year signed an executive order on preventing violence against federal, state, tribal, and local law enforcement. The Justice Department is taking the lead in developing a strategy to reduce violence against these officers.

In the spirit of the President's executive order, OJP has a number of initiatives to help protect America's law enforcement officers. We are a key source of federal support for state, local, and tribal law enforcement, largely through the Byrne Justice Assistance Grants Program.

We also make available safe and effective bullet-resistant armor for police officers. Since 1999, we've assisted law enforcement agencies in purchasing more than 1.2 million pieces of body armor, and we conduct ongoing tests to ensure the effectiveness of specific body armor. It's worth noting that, in the last 30 years, body armor has saved more than 3,000 police officers from death or serious injury.

We also underwrite research on issues of officer health and wellness – issues like roadside safety and factors that contribute to stress and fatigue, which can hinder officer performance and imperil their safety.

We have a data function, too, that benefits public safety decision-making. Since 1987, we've conducted periodic surveys of police officers that provide data and reports – on topics such as equipment and technology, personnel matters, use-of-force, and hiring and training priorities – that help agencies to more effectively support their officers.

And we support law enforcement through training and resources that keep their skills on the cutting edge – to prevent violent encounters and build officer resilience, for example.

Our focus is on the tools, technology, and relationships that are essential to officers. We're working, for example, to foster engagement between law enforcement and youth, and to help officers identify and minimize threats to child and public safety. Our Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has also partnered with the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Yale Child Study Center to develop a toolkit to help officers respond to children who have been exposed to violence and trauma.

Other tools help police officers deal with the trauma of violent crime – on victims, on whole communities, and on themselves. Police officers routinely respond to violent incidents, but just because it's routine doesn't mean it doesn't take a toll. In fact, it may heighten what is known as vicarious trauma, an inevitable challenge to their health and well-being. We also provide technology that helps law enforcement monitor sex offenders and bring them to justice. For example, we administer the public website that provides immediate access to information on the whereabouts of registered sex offenders.

OJP is proud to make these resources available to our law enforcement partners, and we are grateful for the support we're getting from our friends on Capitol Hill. In today's dangerous and complex world, it takes all of us, working together on behalf of our law enforcement officers, to achieve the safe, healthy communities that the citizens of our country deserve. We appreciate all the work that you do, and we look forward to continuing our partnership.

It's now my pleasure to turn the program over to Russ Washington, Acting Director of the COPS Office. Russ and his team are close and vital partners in our efforts to support law enforcement and improve public safety. I appreciate their help in putting together today's event and I'm grateful for the good work that they do each and every day.

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