

REMARKS
AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

OF

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OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

NATIONAL FORUM ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE
OPENING PLENARY

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Thank you, Chris [Kervick]. It's wonderful to be here today. I'm really thrilled to be here at this forum and to have a chance to meet with all of you, including the State Administering Agencies. I want to thank you, Chris, and everyone on the NCJA team for hosting us, and for your leadership and hard work on matters of such critical importance to our nation's safety. My thanks, as well, to the great people at the International Community Corrections Association, both for their role in today's forum and for everything they do to make our communities safer.

It's a privilege to help open what I know will be a productive discussion on the major issues and challenges facing the criminal justice field today. Our great Attorney General, Bill Barr, reminded us of the scope of those challenges recently when he spoke to the Fraternal Order of Police. He said, "We are fighting an unrelenting, never-ending fight against criminal predators in our society." Crime, and particularly violent crime, is an issue this Attorney General does not take lightly, and he is not one to dance around the edges of a problem.

Nor, for that matter, is our President. President Trump was only weeks into office when he signed executive orders aimed at improving public and officer safety. He directed the Department of Justice to put the full weight of its resources behind effective crime reduction programs. The Office of Justice Programs, along with our partners in the COPS Office and the Office on Violence Against Women, has been privileged to play a central role in answering the President's call.

I know that every one of you plays a really critical role as well, by working with state, local and tribal agencies to holistically manage all of your criminal justice programs. Because I know that the Justice Assistance Grant program is a critical part of those efforts, I'm pleased to tell you that you should be seeing your award notifications for your state JAG awards any day now. This year, our Bureau of Justice Assistance will make almost 900 JAG awards at the state, local and tribal levels, worth \$250 million. I know that there are so many great projects being done as part of JAG—from drug task forces to reentry work to drug courts—and I'm deeply grateful for your work to connect all of these important efforts in your community.

We're working with communities on many fronts to help them reduce crime, fight drugs, and support victims. We launched the National Public Safety Partnership in 2017 to support jurisdictions where the crime rate is well above the national average. PSP combines resources from DOJ's enforcement units—the FBI, DEA, ATF and Marshals Service—along with our grant-making units, the U.S. Attorneys' offices and local law enforcement agencies. We've worked with 41 sites, including 10 new sites that the Attorney General announced this summer.

To take just one example, New Orleans saw a 14-percent jump in violent crime from 2015 to 2016, and a staggering rise of 30 percent over the prior five years. Under PSP, the New Orleans police began focusing law enforcement resources on two particularly dangerous areas, and between 2016 and 2018, homicides dropped by 16 percent, shootings decreased by 25 percent and armed robberies declined by 28 percent.

New Orleans ended 2018 with its lowest murder toll since the early 70s. And the trend continues in 2019. Homicides for the year have dropped another 31 percent, compared to the same period last year, and armed robberies have decreased by 29 percent.

New Orleans is one incredible success story from a whole book of victories. We're seeing progress in other sites as well—from Birmingham to St. Louis to Compton, and points in between. The lessons we're learning from each one of these sites have been invaluable. In fact, we just held our annual PSP summit in Memphis, which brought together U.S. Attorneys, local law enforcement, prosecutors and community organizations from across the country for three days of training and networking.

PSP is one critical part of our violence reduction work. Project Safe Neighborhoods is another cornerstone effort. Our Bureau of Justice Assistance has been providing funding and assistance under this effort for the better part of the last two decades. Last year, we awarded more than \$30 million in PSN grants to U.S. Attorney districts, and we're seeing success in places like Gary, Indiana, where shootings in 2017 fell 21 percent, homicides dropped 16 percent and total violent crime went down more than 20 percent. And in Lexington, Kentucky, which saw a decrease in violent crime of 13 percent and a 21-percent drop in homicides in the first year of that program.

On top of these two major Department initiatives, OJP continues to make substantial investments in programs that promote evidence-based crime reduction strategies. BJA's Strategies for Policing Innovation program has supported more than 70 projects that bring researchers and practitioners together to test promising approaches in crime prevention and crime reduction. We just funded 11 new sites. We also awarded 20 new grants to support prosecutors' offices as they develop evidence-based violent crime strategies. And we just made eight new awards under our Local Crime Gun Intelligence Center Integration Initiative. Crime gun intelligence centers are managed by our partners at ATF in cooperation with local law enforcement, and they have been critical to curbing gun violence in a number of cities. In some cases, they have reduced the turnaround time for ballistics analysis from days and even weeks to just a matter of hours.

I'd like to say a few words about reentry, which is a top public safety priority of this Administration. The President himself has said, "We're all better off when former inmates can reenter society as law-abiding, productive citizens." Last year, we awarded almost \$75 million to support adult and juvenile reentry programs in dozens of state, local and tribal jurisdictions. Since the Second Chance Act was signed into law 10 years ago, BJA has made more than \$400 million available to help state, local and tribal governments and non-profit organizations support reentry and recidivism efforts around the country. These grants have helped us all better understand and respond to the needs of people released from incarceration and mitigate the likelihood they'll recidivate. To take one example, the Alameda County Sheriff's Office in California runs a program called the Operation My Home Town reentry program, which provides an array of services to meet the needs of people recently released from jail. We know that finding a job is one of the most important ingredients of reentry success, so Second Chance funds allowed the

grantee to partner with the Workforce Development Board and the Alameda County Probation Department to create an effective pipeline to employment.

Apart from supporting reentry and reducing violent crime, OJP remains committed to fighting opioids and drugs, supporting tribes and serving victims. We're now rolling out victim assistance awards from our Office for Victims of Crime. I was just in Kentucky with Governor Bevin three days ago, where I helped to announce a new statewide law enforcement-based victim assistance initiative. I also announced \$1.2 billion in victim assistance grants to 32 states. The rest of the victim assistance and compensation formula grants will follow shortly.

We're also making \$167 million available to tribes this year under a Tribal Victim Service Set-Aside, which we launched last year. This is on top of our Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation. Last year, OJP, OVW, and COPS awarded 225 grants, totaling more than \$113 million, to 125 separate tribes under CTAS.

And this year, we'll be continuing our substantial investments in combating the opioid crisis. Last year, we awarded more than \$320 million to fund drug courts and to support partnerships between law enforcement and treatment providers. We'll be continuing that level of investment with FY 19 funding.

I want to end with a commitment to all of you. The Department of Justice is led by an Attorney General who cares deeply about the safety of America's communities. He will stop at nothing to make sure our law enforcement officers, our prosecutors, our partners in community corrections, our victim advocates and our juvenile justice professionals have what they need to protect and serve their citizens. I ask that you please let me know how we can do that better.

We know that the problems some communities are facing are substantial. That's why the Attorney General and we at OJP are committed to making our funding directly available to you at the state and local levels, to the greatest extent possible.

I appreciate all the work that each of you is doing to support our criminal justice professionals, I'm grateful for your partnership with OJP and the Department of Justice and I look forward to working with you in the months and years ahead to advance our shared goal of safe and healthy communities throughout America.

Thank you, and best wishes for a productive forum.

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