

REMARKS

OF

MARY LOU LEARY
ACTING ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

NATIVE AMERICAN ISSUES SUBCOMMITTEE AND
UNITED TRIBES TECHNICAL COLLEGE TRIBAL LEADERS' SUMMIT

ON

SEPTEMBER 6, 2012
BISMARCK, ND

Thank you. I'm delighted to be here and want to thank the United Tribes Technical College and my colleague, Tim Purdon, and his office for hosting us. My thanks as well to the tribal leaders and other tribal officials here today.

I want to take just a few minutes to mention some of the many ways my agency – the Office of Justice Programs – is working with tribes to support their public safety efforts. This is a very big and important part of our mission at OJP, and one we take very seriously.

Our programs run the gamut of criminal and juvenile justice, from violence against women and youth crime to sex offender management and tribal jails. I'll talk a little about some of those efforts in a moment, but I think it's important that you know that one of our primary concerns is not only making sure that resources are available to tribes, but ensuring they're accessible.

In listening sessions the Attorney General held three years ago, tribal leaders told us over and over that the Department's grant processes weren't flexible enough. So we created a streamlined approach to make it easier for tribes to apply for funds. We call this the Consolidated Tribal Assistance Solicitation, or CTAS. Basically, CTAS serves as a single application for our tribal-specific programs – and this includes not only my agency, but also the COPS Office and the Office on Violence Against Women, the Department's two other grant-making offices.

In 2010 and 2011, we awarded 286 grants totaling some \$245 million to support prevention, intervention, and enforcement efforts in eight program areas – public safety and community policing, meth enforcement, justice systems and alcohol and substance abuse, corrections and correctional alternatives, violence against women, elder abuse, juvenile justice, and tribal youth programs. For example, our Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention awarded a grant to the Standing Rock Tribe to create a diversion program for first-time juvenile offenders. And our Bureau of Justice Assistance awarded a grant to implement a family-based wellness court to provide intervention for court-involved youth and their families.

We're constantly seeking input from tribes on how we can make CTAS responsive to tribal needs, and we've made a number of adjustments to address tribes' concerns and enhance flexibility. For instance, this year's solicitation added a comprehensive strategic planning demonstration project to be funded by our Bureau of Justice Assistance. We'll be announcing this year's awards in the coming weeks.

Of course, tribes are eligible to apply for any appropriate funding from the Justice Department outside of the CTAS process as well. I'm happy to say that just this week we awarded grants to the Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold, the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and the Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, to help them implement and comply with the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act of 2006, which seeks to close gaps and loopholes in sex offender registration and notification programs.

Now, I would like to highlight out a couple of specific areas of our work. First, we're working with tribes to address violence against women through a variety of programs. Our

Office for Victims of Crime, for example, manages a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner and Sexual Assault Response Team Initiative to support culturally appropriate services to sexual assault victims in Indian country. We have two national coordinators, one in the Indian Health Service and one in the FBI. We've also published a DVD and guidebook on prosecuting domestic violence crimes in Indian country, intended for both prosecutors and advocates. Meanwhile, our research arm – the National Institute of Justice – is working with the Office on Violence Against Women on a research effort to collect information on violence against Native women so we can find culturally appropriate solutions to these crimes.

Another major area of focus has been implementation of the Tribal Law and Order Act. Last year, I established the TLOA Interagency Programs Steering Committee to coordinate OJP's efforts with other federal agencies, including the Departments of Health and Human Services, Interior, and others. We've been able to make a lot of progress through this collaboration. For example, we helped develop a Memorandum of Understanding on tribal substance abuse programs signed by the Attorney General and the Secretaries of HHS and Interior last year.

We've also been able to expand our delinquency prevention efforts. In July, we held our second National Intertribal Youth Summit in partnership with the White House. These summits are a terrific forum for bringing tribal youth together to talk about their concerns and give them a voice in how the federal government should respond to tribal needs.

Another important product of our collaboration is a plan focusing on alternatives to incarceration and reentry. We worked closely with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and we consulted tribal leaders to hold focus groups with tribal officials on this effort. I think what we developed is a very forward-thinking document that looks at tribal corrections as an opportunity to reduce crime and rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders. Along those lines, our Bureau of Justice Assistance issued a solicitation this year to fund training and technical assistance designed to develop and enhance alternatives to incarceration and to build tribal community corrections capacity.

One of the major benefits of TLOA is that it provides our Bureau of Justice Statistics additional ability to collect tribal crime data. This, of course, will give us a better understanding of the nature and extent of crime in Indian country. But by ensuring that tribes have accurate statistics, it also means that more tribes are eligible for funding under our Byrne Justice Assistance Grants program, which is our largest criminal justice funding resource.

Aside from making sure our programs are well-managed and responsive to tribal needs, our highest priority is ensuring that the lines of communication are open and that we're engaged in a true partnership with tribes. We've held a number of Tribal Justice, Safety, and Wellness Sessions to share information and to provide a forum for consultation with tribes. We're also working on a Department-wide system to improve delivery of training and technical assistance to tribal communities. And as I mentioned earlier, we're constantly looking for feedback from tribal leaders and tribal officials on ways we can improve our responsiveness.

So I invite your thoughts, comments, ideas. It's very important that we hear from you about whether what we're doing is working and what we can do to make it work better.

Thank you.

###