



Department of Justice

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD OF

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ACTING DIRECTOR
OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

BEFORE THE

**UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY**

HEARING ENTITLED

**“THE VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT:
25 YEARS OF PROTECTING AND SUPPORTING VICTIMS”**

PRESENTED

APRIL 28, 2009

Chairman Leahy, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit a statement for the record on behalf of the Department of Justice (the Department) regarding the 25th anniversary of the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). One important mission of the Department of Justice, including the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) and the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), includes providing resources and leadership to support key services for crime victims.

OJP, and OVC in particular, is proud to join with Members of Congress, victims, victim advocates, and victim service organizations across the Nation in celebrating National Crime Victims' Rights Week and VOCA's 25th anniversary. As the Committee is aware, VOCA created the Crime Victims Fund, an innovative method for using fines and penalties from federal criminals to fund services for victims. In the past 25 years, more than \$6.9 billion from the Crime Victims Fund has been distributed to states and communities to support victim assistance and compensation programs.

Today, through VOCA, 4,200 local public and nonprofit organizations provide counseling, courtroom advocacy, temporary housing, and a host of other services. Funds also have been used to aid victims of terrorism, raise awareness of victims' rights, support victims in Indian country, and train thousands of victim service providers and criminal justice and allied professionals. Not a cent of that money has come from taxes.

While we can appreciate our achievements, we must also recognize the steep challenges that lie ahead. The economy has taken a toll on state and local victim assistance programs. Victim compensation programs are stretched thin by increasing demand.

The Department has already taken steps to address this problem, thanks to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act), which Congress passed and President Obama signed into law. Recently, Attorney General Holder announced \$95 million in Recovery Act victim compensation and assistance grants. These funds will be used to support direct services to vulnerable and underserved victims such as child abuse victims, victims with disabilities, victims in rural communities and victims in inner cities.

Funds will also be used to reimburse victims for out-of-pocket expenses related to their victimization, including therapy for rape and child abuse victims. Victim compensation programs expect to spend more than half their funding for medical services. Funds can also be used for lost wages for victims, a critical element as more Americans are losing jobs and benefits.

Later this year, OVC will also award \$5 million in Recovery Act discretionary funds to provide training and technical assistance and to support demonstration programs in areas ranging from child abuse to sexual assault to victim services in corrections. These funds will help improve the knowledge and skills base of victim service practitioners, and they will help us move toward a more evidence-based approach to victim assistance.

These Recovery Act grants are a significant step forward. Now we must build on these efforts to make sure that no victim assistance program closes its doors, that no sexual assault victim is turned away from a rape crisis center, and that no survivor of a homicide victim is told that she's on her own. Increased funding is needed in order to just maintain critical services to victims of violent crime. But we also must address

emerging crimes such as financial exploitation of the elderly, cybercrime, identity theft, international terrorism, and human trafficking.

The Crime Victims Fund cap level for Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 is \$635 million, a \$45 million increase from the FY 2008 level. The President's FY 2010 budget request would raise the cap to \$700 million. Please be assured that Attorney General Holder and I are fully committed to preserving the integrity of the Crime Victims Fund.

As part of the Department's National Crime Victims' Rights Week activities, the Attorney General honored men and women from across the Nation who have devoted their lives to serving crime victims. Some of those honored had been victims themselves and have used that experience to help others. Their stories remind us that crime victims must never be forgotten, and that justice for victims is justice for us all. The Department, including OJP and OVC, will not waver in their dedication to improving the lives of crime victims, and we would welcome any discussion of how our efforts can be improved.

This concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement on behalf of the Department of Justice.