

REMARKS

OF

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ACTING ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL  
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES CONFERENCE

ON

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 1, 2012  
WASHINGTON, DC

Thank you, Barney. I'm so very pleased to be here and honored to join the Deputy Attorney General.

I want to begin by thanking Barney and his staff for all they do. The COPS Office has been a vital partner of the Office of Justice Programs, and I appreciate that they've remained committed to working together to meet the needs of law enforcement. I'd also like to say that, as a former Deputy Director of the COPS Office, I understand the important contributions the office has made to policing over the years, and I'm so pleased to see that work continue under Barney's outstanding leadership. The COPS Office has made – and continues to make – a real difference.

Let me also commend all of you, our nation's law enforcement leaders and officers and our many other partners in public safety. Thanks to you and your counterparts across the country, our nation continues to see crime rates fall. Considering that you continue to face significant budget and staffing challenges, your success in keeping our communities safe is remarkable.

As you know, this year's conference focuses on evolution and change in the policing profession. This truly is a time of great change for law enforcement. Technology has become indispensable in preventing, responding to, investigating, and solving crimes. Data and research are informing public safety strategy like never before. And the scope of law enforcement responsibility has expanded greatly. The profession looks very different from the day when the COPS Office first opened its doors 18 years ago.

But while the landscape has changed, some of the challenges remain the same. Among the biggest challenges are the threats – often deadly – that law enforcement officers encounter on a daily basis.

The statistics on officers injured and killed in the line of duty are troubling and they're unacceptable. I believe – and this Department of Justice believes – that, just as you work hard to protect us, we have an obligation to do everything in our power to protect you. You'll note that this conference is devoting several sessions to the subject of officer safety, and you'll hear about the work we're doing.

We've been a partner with the COPS Office in the Department's Officer Safety and Wellness Working Group. And we're supporting an array of other programs designed to keep officers safe and healthy. OJP's VALOR Initiative has provided training to more than 5,200 law enforcement professionals to help them identify and prevent deadly encounters and improve survivability. We continue to administer the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Program and the Body Armor Safety Initiative, which are helping to save lives. Last year, we awarded more than \$24 million to help nearly 5,000 jurisdictions purchase more than 188,000 protective vests. Of the 47 law enforcement and correctional officers whose lives were saved by bullet- and stab-resistant vests in 2011 and the first six months of this year, 24 were wearing vests purchased – in part – with federal funds.

We're also engaged in research to support officer safety and wellness, and OJP continues to provide substantial funding through our Byrne-JAG program to help law enforcement officers

do their jobs safely and effectively. This year, we'll award more than \$295 million to support local and state criminal justice efforts.

Through training, equipment, funding, and better information, the Office of Justice Programs – working hand in hand with the COPS Office – is working tirelessly to protect law enforcement officers who risk their health and safety day in and day out. We take that as a solemn responsibility, and one we are proud to fulfill.

We also want to make sure you have the support and the confidence of the citizens you protect. Barney has been a huge proponent of community involvement in crime prevention and reduction efforts and of strengthening relationships between law enforcement and the neighborhoods you serve. Key to that is earning the community's trust, and that hinges on ensuring law enforcement is doing its job fairly in the eyes of the public.

Staff from our Bureau of Justice Assistance and National Institute of Justice are working with the COPS Office to share ideas around issues of procedural justice and police legitimacy. COPS is now working with Professor Tom Tyler – a pioneer in this area – to develop and pilot test a training curriculum for supervisors on procedural justice. Working with the Police Executive Research Forum, we will then take the curriculum and use it as part of an effort to improve perceptions of the police in minority communities.

I know this issue of police legitimacy is a huge concern of police chiefs and sheriffs. I'm glad so many departments are looking at how they can strengthen their ties to communities, and I'm pleased the Department of Justice is helping advance the discussion and that the COPS Office has made it a topic for this conference.

The Office of Justice Programs is also working hard to get critical information out to you in a way that you can use it. One of our most important roles is to generate and disseminate knowledge that can be applied in the field.

Last year, we launched our “what works” database, CrimeSolutions.gov, which now has almost 220 evidence-based programs, each of them rated for effectiveness. The beauty of this database is that it was created with the front-line practitioner in mind. We're also piloting something called the OJP Diagnostic Center. This is a one-stop consultation service designed to help states, localities, and tribes identify and adapt evidence-based approaches. We hope to open this Center for general business in the fall.

Providing information, strengthening police-community relationships, and protecting officers – these are all ways the Office of Justice Programs is working to support law enforcement. I feel very fortunate to have a partner like Barney Melekian as we do this work, and I feel blessed that we have committed leaders like Eric Holder, Jim Cole, and Tony West, all of whom care deeply about these issues.

And I'm proud to have the opportunity to work with dedicated and hard-working professionals like all of you. In spite of the challenges you face, you have managed to make our

communities safer and our justice system stronger. I am grateful for all you do, and I look forward to continuing our partnership.

Thank you.

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