

ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO ADDRESS TO A DRUG ENFORCEMENT
ADMINISTRATION 20TH ANNIVERSARY CEREMONY

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ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO: It is a great honor to be here today to recognize 20 years of valiant effort on the part Drug Enforcement Administration to help create a drug-free America where our children will no longer be exposed to the scourge of drugs, where we can live more peacefully on our streets, where we can believe in an America that so many of us have known before.

Let us renew our fight for that ultimate goal, but first let's recognize that the heroes and the heroines of that fight have been the agents of this department, of other federal agencies and of law enforcement around this nation and the world.

Law enforcement has the toughest job of anybody in the criminal justice system. Agents have given their lives and they have put their lives on the line day in and day out. They've had to make tough legal decisions, often without going to law school, certainly with not having a nice office and a law library at their back. They have had to deal with tense situations. And day in and day out, agents of the DEA and law enforcement agents around this nation serve their people with tremendous valor and tremendous sensitivity, and we all owe them a boundless debt of

gratitude.

(Applause.)

There are so many caring agents. They have been in my office. I have seen them on the streets. I have dealt with so many sensitive, thoughtful, caring police officers who want nothing more than to serve the people who they see day in and day out.

And let us all, as a nation, as the people and the citizens of this nation, as law enforcement officers, join together in a partnership that renews our pledge, renews our effort and sends these messages.

First of all, let us tell our friends and foes around the world that we continue to be committed to doing everything we can to stem the tide of drugs from abroad and to work with the countries around the world with whom we have a partnership to renew that effort with all the vigor at our command.

Let us send a message throughout all federal agencies that there aren't any turf battles, that we have too much to do and that all agencies can work together to use our limited resources in the wisest manner possible without duplication to coordinate our efforts to make sure, working with the new director Lee Brown, that we will have a coordinated effort in this remarkable partnership to stem the tide of drugs in America.

But most of all, let's follow a lot of what DEA has done and renew our partnership to local law enforcement. I have seen some agents come to town and tell me what to do. I've seen some other agents come to town and have a partnership with me. The

partnerships work a lot better, and the good drug enforcement agent knows far better than anybody else that a local law enforcement official, the police officers on the street, knows his or her streets far better. They know their problems far better. They know their resources and their needs. Let us commit ourselves to a long and lasting partnership with state and local law enforcement throughout this nation.

Let us make sure, as we renew our efforts against the major traffickers and the drug distributors, that whether it be state government or the federal government, that we are going to have enough prison cells to house these major traffickers wherever they are, whether they're in state courts or federal courts, for the length of time that judges are sentencing them. Let us make sure we have truth in sentencing for these traffickers and these distributors, and let them understand that when they get sentenced to 20 years, we're going to mean it.

(Applause.)

But let us understand too that there are people who are going to stay in our communities because we do not have adequate resources to deal with them in prison. There are going to be people in prison who are coming back to our communities sooner rather than later. And let us do everything within our power to make sure they are in our communities or come back to our communities with the best possible chance of not doing it again.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO (continuing): It's not going to work to

pick somebody up from prison and dump them back into the street without doing anything to address what caused the problem in the first place.

But let's develop a carrot-and-stick approach that lets the person know that there is an opportunity for treatment, there is an opportunity to get off to the right start again, such as in our drug court in Dade County, but if they mess up, if they blow the opportunity, they face a certain sanction. These programs can work, they make sense, and we've got to renew our effort to do everything we can to explore what the communities of this nation have done in developing alternative sanctions for drug abusers rather than the traffickers and make sure that they are implemented wherever we can get them implemented:

But let us look to what I think is one of the travesties in America today. In my conversations with mayors, with local law enforcement and treatment people, there are too many cities in this nation who have waiting lists for treatment beds, people who are begging and pleading for treatment, people who are on the verge of going out to rob or burglarize again to get cash to sustain their habit unless we can provide treatment.

Something is terribly wrong with a nation that says to a drunk who kills three people and breaks his two arms in the process of drunk driving that he will have his arm set at the local public hospital tonight at the taxpayers' expense, but we turn to that crack addict who's reached rock bottom and is pleading for help, and we tell him he has to wait for treatment.

We've got to renew our commitment to provide treatment to those who want it in America.

(Applause.)

But most of all, we've got to understand that drugs, violence, so much of what we see in America today is the symptom of a deeper problem in society, and that is that for too long now, America has forgotten or neglected its children. We've got to renew our commitment, as DEA has so affirmed again and again, to our young people. A week ago, I was in New York City on the floating hospital ship, and there were law enforcement explorers of the Drug Enforcement Administration with agents giving their Sunday morning to work with these youngsters, to give them an opportunity, a sense that there is a future, the sense that they are somebody and can have self-respect and can see a career of public service that means something to them.

Let us renew our commitment to the children of America, to develop wherever we can prevention programs that encourage self-respect, encourage a sense of hope for the future, and that gives to all the children of America the opportunity to grow in a safe, healthy, drug-free world.

(Applause.)

The question a reporter will ask me when I leave here is, how do you propose to do that, Ms. Reno? And that's the question all of us have got to ask, not in a politically partisan way, not with a lot of rhetoric, but sitting down to solve the problem that all Americans are concerned about, working together, Republicans

and Democrats, law enforcement and treatment people, citizens and public servants. All of us working together without a lot of rhetoric, but with a lot of common sense can solve this problem and meet these pledges.

It is a great honor for me to be here today. On behalf of all Americans, I thank this department for its valiant public service.

(Applause.)

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