UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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TOWN HALL FORUM WITH THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(11:22 a.m.)

MS. ROBINSON: I'm really delighted to welcome Attorney General Janet Reno. Now, as I said before, our time for this session is quite short. And I have also learned over four and some years of working with her that she hates long introductions, but I do want you to know one very important thing about Janet Reno, and that is her strong and steadfast commitment to communities and to helping them deal with problems of crime and justice.

I often think that no other issue -- and when you think about the broad array of things the Department deals with, I think this is kind of amazing -- that no other issue holds her interest like that of communities and crime. She has so clearly made this one of her highest priorities in her five years, and it is five years this Thursday that she has been at the Justice Department.

(Applause.)

She never forgets her roots, what it's like to really be out there on the front lines. And when she gets back from a, perhaps at times, contentious hearing on Capitol Hill or dealing with the latest Washington crisis de jure, time and again she returns to these issues that are so near and dear to her heart.

So please join me now in welcoming the Attorney General of the United States, Janet Reno.

(Applause.)

GENERAL RENO: I thank you so much for that warm welcome. But I'm the one that should be thanking you. I see so many people in this room just in the few moments I've been here who give me strength and courage and energy and new ideas.

When I came to Washington I worried that I would lose my sense of community. But I

have discovered that, instead of losing a community, I've just gained many others, and that is because of you.

I think, to put it in historical perspective, community was the place that people went to get their problems solved probably until the Depression. With the Depression, people began to look to Washington as a place to solve problems. That immediately was followed by World War Two and people became confirmed in their belief that Washington solved problems.

In the fifties and sixties they looked to Washington for civil rights. In the seventies they looked to Washington for money and LEAA grants and Model Cities grants. But there was just money in too many instances; there wasn't the sense of community.

In the eighties, Washington began to shift the programs to the States without the dollars, and then the States began to shift the programs back to the community without the dollars. I think we have come full circle, for communities, with their backs up against the wall, have stopped trying to figure out who has the best grants writer and have suddenly started looking at how they can reach out to each other and come back to the human equation and how we deal with human issues in the most profound and effective way possible.

You all are the leaders in that effort and I just cannot tell you how much I admire you and how gratified I am to see so many people here today.

One of the institutions that has been most remote and sometimes foreign to people is the justice system, particularly in large urban areas or particularly if it involves a rural area where the court is many miles away. I do know that if you're exposed to a court you can better understand it.

In the early eighties, as crime escalated in Miami, we had a number of people volunteer as prosecutor's aides. They were invaluable to us. At the end of the year I had them all out to lunch and one said: Look, when I came down to volunteer I was just going to prove that you all were selling the courthouse out from under us. But my prosecutor and my judge let me sit in on every conference but one, and in the year I've been here I've only disagreed with the judge once.

I have seen it in other situations. We formed a neighborhood group composed of a community-friendly police officer, a teacher, a youth counselor, and a public health nurse. Everyone was frustrated about the sentences being handed down in the juvenile court for one particular offender. He just didn't understand the neighborhood or the effect that this kid was having on the neighborhood. He didn't understand, the judge didn't understand, that the neighbors also had some really good constructive ideas about what could be done.

So the police officer got a bus, put them all on the bus, and took them up to the court,

and suddenly there was an understanding of neighborhood, an understanding of community, an understanding of people's interests that made such a significant difference.

Thus, what you're doing today in terms of developing systems that permit people to understand who their judges are, what they're doing, and permits judges to understand the people they are adjudicating and the neighborhood that is affected is so vitally important.

Some people tell me, though, that when we speak of community justice we're speaking just of the justice system per se, and they say it is too expensive to have community justice. And I say: Why? All you're doing is reallocating the caseload. Well, it's too expensive; we need a new facility. It doesn't necessarily mean a new facility if we can work out transportation and allot calendars in the right way. Let's be innovative.

One of the beautiful things about community justice is that computers are going to help us allocate the caseloads in the right way and link people in marvelous ways if we do it right. Essential to this whole effort is to reach out to others, to that public health nurse who knows how to intervene with that family that doesn't want to come in for help, doesn't want to address the truancy problem, an ombudsman that knows how to get that vacant lot cleared and how to get that automobile that's been sitting on the corner for five years off the street, a treatment professional that knows how to persuade that mother to seek treatment for her crack addiction, and yet a judge who can convince that mother, that if she will work with us, that those children that she adores will not be taken away from her.

But what do you do with the children while she's in treatment? How do we work out all these problems? How do we engage in problem-solving?

One of the most profound moments that I have had was, of all places, at a tribal justice conference at Harvard Law School. A tribal leader stood up and said to me: We appreciate what you're doing in terms of tribal justice, but you have much to learn.

It reminded me of my friends, the Mikasuki Indians, in the Everglades, who said: Janewood, to my mother, who was the Princess of Pungostineegi -- they named her "Princess Rumor-Bearer."

(Laughter.)

That was rather tongue in cheek, because she had gotten blankets and pumps and medical supplies and doctors in when there was an epidemic and then published the need for it in the paper. So that's how she got the name "Rumor-Bearer."

We won't send our children to white people's schools because they teach them to lie and to cheat and to steal. You have much to learn from us.

And we have much to learn from each other, from all of us. But what they told me there as they described the sentencing circles of their tribal tradition was that: You in the Anglo-Saxon tradition like to ascribe blame. It's either black or white, guilt or innocence. And when you walk out of the courtroom, you haven't solved the problem.

You all are here today to solve problems that can make such an extraordinary difference for us all, and if we put that problem-solving hat on we can make a difference.

But then there are those that argue: It's just going to be a feel-good, do-good court that isn't going to pay any attention to individual rights, and we're going to be engaged in corrective activities 10 and 15 years from now because we forgot about constitutional rights. You don't have to forget about constitutional rights to solve problems. We are creative enough and bold enough to solve the problems and to maintain our constitutional protections as we know them, and I think, working together, we can do this.

This morning at our 8:30 conference, Noel Brennan said: There are 800 people over there; it's so exciting. There is an energy in this room, and I know exactly what she meant. I have been convinced that community justice would become a central theme in every community across this Nation. I am convinced that it will now because of you, all of you who care about constitutional rights, about problem solving, but mostly about the people that we all serve.

Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

MS. ROBINSON: Now is your chance to ask the Attorney General questions. We have mikes in each of the balconies and on the floor here, and please be fairly brief and identify yourself.

MR. FINNEY: Hell, Ms. Attorney General. I'm Bill Finney and I'm from St. Paul, Minnesota, where I'm a police officer.

We've had a wonderful experience with Joe Brann and the Office of COPS in terms of financial assistance to local law enforcement. As we move forward in this community justice area, with the widespread interest we have here in the room and probably around the Nation, can we expect that we'll be getting some financial assistance from the Federal Government?

GENERAL RENO: One of the things that I ask, I think it's important first to do, and you heard me allude to it earlier, is think about how you affect community justice without new dollars first. And that makes you very creative and very bold, and you do extraordinary things

when you're not campaigning against each other for money.

But what we're also trying to do is to develop moneys and provide in this new budget that has just been submitted, moneys for community justice, as well as special programs for prosecutors and courts that again can fit into the community justice mold. And I would ask Laurie to be a little bit more specific about the plans.

GENERAL RENO: Sure. There is a $50 million request in the President's 1999 budget for community prosecution. The local law enforcement block grant money can be used for drug courts. We're seeking $30 million again for drug courts, $50 million for the Courts program the Attorney General mentions, and another $100 million for work with prosecutors, probation and others out in the community.

So we recognize that resources are critical, but I think tied to it, as the Attorney General said, is the sharing of information from the Federal level and the opportunity to provide technical assistance.

GENERAL RENO: Let me give you an example. There is violence against women moneys that have been available. There are distributions to States and then the States are required to develop a plan. So often as part of community justice, we hear the police officer tell us that it's the domestic, the family violence, that is one of the major problems.

Instead of just doing one piece of it, it's more effective, I think, if a community plans as a whole and says: Maybe we can get some of this money from the State that the Federal Government is distributing, but if we put this piece in we can be more effective. I just think if we approach the concept of community justice as a whole, think about the different moneys that are available, and, most of all, knit those moneys together as a more effective whole, we can get a better return on our dollars.

MR. FINNEY: Thank you very much.

MS. ROBINSON: Yes, ma'am.

MS. HOOVER: My name is Jean Hoover. I'm a retired law enforcement officer. I live in Columbia, Missouri, right now.

In the interest of preemptive enforcement other than reactive enforcement, I took great interest in the hate crimes initiatives that were announced in November of '97. Part of that component was the community hate crimes work group which is, as I understand it, to be composed of citizens, local prosecutors, local law enforcement, and of course the U.S. Attorney's Office. And I am getting a lot of interest in the community, especially in the Midwest.

But we are unable to get any more direction or structure as to how this is going to be formed, when, what the expectations of the framework will be. And I just wondered if you have any more information on that I could take back?

GENERAL RENO: You are in the Western District of Missouri?

MS. HOOVER: Yes, ma'am.

GENERAL RENO: Let me have Steve Hill call you. And anybody, what we have done as a follow-up to the conference is ask each U.S. Attorney to designate a point of contact within their office to reach out to others and to form these working groups, recognizing that in some instances there may already exist in a district, and some of you may have the local prosecutor or a local community relations board that has done this, but that we want to reach out.

And I will ask Steve Hill to call you. Anybody else that has problems with contacting or finding out where we get started, call the U.S. Attorney's Office, ask for the hate crimes coordinator for the office. And if you have problems, call me at 202-514-2002.

MS. HOOVER: Thank you, ma'am, because it's an important initiative and we are getting enough local resistance in our geographic area that it's important in this case that the directive and the structure comes from the top down, so that we can actually reach some of the people who need to be persuaded to do things in a more equitable way.

GENERAL RENO: It really can be wonderfully effective if the local prosecutor and the U. S. Attorney work together. In some instances it may require Federal prosecution because the State sentence may not be adequate. In other instance it may be far more appropriate to handle it in the State court.

It makes such a difference if the FBI works with local advocacy groups to explain the system, to let people know what they do and how to report it. And if we also gain information from those that may disagree, but don't argue or don't advocate violation of the law, they can be marvelous intermediaries in terms of resolving friction.

Another effort that we want to undertake is to do everything we can to maintain the Community Relations Service, which has been a marvelous force in community after community across the Nation. Its funding has been substantially reduced and we continue to fight to restore that funding, and at the same time they do an extraordinary job with limited dollars.

MS. HOOVER: Thank you very much.

MS. ROBINSON: Dr. Jan Chaiken wanted to add to this.

DR. CHAIKEN: I did want to clarify that the initiative that you mentioned is moving forward, and just two weeks ago there were meetings here in D.C. and there was a representative of every U.S. Attorney's district at the planning sessions on how to put together these working groups. So you should be receiving more concrete information shortly on this.

MS. ROBINSON: I want to turn to the gentleman up in the balcony.

MR. STONE: Attorney General Reno, it's Chris Stone from the Vera Institute of Justice in New York.

A few months ago your Department and you organized an opportunity for public defenders and those involved with indigent defense around the country to come together here in Washington and talk with you and others about what the Department could do and what they could do to improve the quality and move public defense forward in this country.

I'm wondering what you see as the role of public defenders in community justice. Do you think they have an important role in these initiatives? Are there examples of some of those roles that you would like to see spread more widely, and how can the Department help the public defenders out there?

GENERAL RENO: I see an absolutely critical role for a public defender who's interested in problem solving. At that session of lawyers representing indigent defendants, it was interesting because some public defenders see different roles for themselves. Some say: Oh, those that work at problem solving are just social workers. And the social workers say: The others aren't really caring about their client.

I think, and it comes back to the basic point that I made, you can be a problem solver while at the same time being a very diligent protector of your client's rights. I think the two roles are not in conflict. But I don't think enough public defenders realize what wonderful results they could get for their clients by learning a little bit more about what they can do as problem solvers.

So I think we can do a great deal if we reach out, if we include them. The best example I have seen was in a drug court context when we established the drug court in Dade County. That drug court could never have been established without the cooperation of the public defender. He could have blocked everything by refusing pleas, by refusing to participate in the court, by telling us to take the case to trial, and his clients would have gotten credit time served and little more in terms of treatment or other support mechanisms.

The public defender was a fellow by the name of Hugh Rodham, the assistant public

defender. And we didn't know who Hugh Rodham was in those days, but one thing he did was get his clients in the back room, and every now and then you could hear him raise his voice and tell them to get with it and let's go.

He was assiduous in protecting his clients' rights, but he was also extraordinarily helpful in making sure his clients understood that here was a real chance to solve their problems. And I think that is an example of what can be done.

We in the Justice Department, have been in continuing conversation with defense lawyers and the ABA, the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, to see what role we can play in advocating for funding for public defenders and trying to provide a balance.

MS. ROBINSON: Shay Bilchik wanted to add.

MR. BILCHIK: Just a short add-on to that, Chris. We are during the current funding year planning seed money to develop a juvenile defender center to support the advocacy on behalf of the juvenile delinquents across the country, who right now, perhaps in many instances, in many jurisdictions, don't get the kind of adequate representation they need from the defense bar.

So we are in our proposed program plan going to start what is hopefully a long-term proposition to develop a juvenile defenders center that would serve public defenders throughout the country.

GENERAL RENO: And I think all of you in community justice should again remember, we have had some interesting studies done. With DNA we have been able to determine the situations that create situations where a totally innocent person has been convicted. We must be very, very careful that we don't jump to conclusions in this process.

Those of you who are not the lawyers, who are not the judges, can play a vital role in making sure that as we direct our efforts against a person as we hold them in custody, as we take away their liberty in some minimal way in order to solve problems, that we're doing it with the right person, remembering that the innocent person who is told that he or she committed a crime and that they are going to have to do this or that or the other or else, feels an outrage at the system that can never ever be corrected, and the best way to handle it is to never let it happen.

MS. ROBINSON: Ann?

MS. PALMER: Unfortunately, I forgot my milk crate this morning.

I'm Rae Ann Palmer from the city manager's office in the City of Hartford, Connecticut,

and I'd like to do two things. I'd like to share with you a success story that builds on what the gentleman from St. Paul asked about resources. In Hartford we're working very diligently to open a community court, and we're doing that with resources that we received very early in your administration through the comprehensive communities program.

We're also leveraging some resources that were enabled by State legislation, some City of Hartford general funds dollars that we're using, and also some local law enforcement block grant funds, that will together piece together the funding to get us into our first year of operation. And then we're looking to have the State legislature go ahead and fund the court for us.

So I think that as we do this community justice we need to be creative in how we fund it. We need to be able to piece funding sources together.

But more importantly, and it was really the question that I wanted to ask you, Madam Attorney General, was: We're talking about system change here, we're talking about taking systems and having them react differently. In Hartford our court started because the community was so clear that we were not addressing quality of life issues and that they were very important to us and that it wasn't working in our neighborhoods.

But it's been a long, hard process to get us to the table, and we've done it in part with funding, but in part with lots of technical assistance.

Are you in this for the long haul with us? Do you recognize that this is a very slow process that has taken us literally two years to get to the point that I can say to you we'll open in June, barring the building being ready on time? And will you be with us? Will you continue to provide us technical assistance? Because the other piece of that is that having your intervention, having you look over our shoulder, helps keep us honest and helps keep people at the table, frankly, that don't always want to be there.

GENERAL RENO: I'll be there every step of the way that I can. When I get in my truck when I leave this job, I'll stop by and see how you're doing.

(Laughter and applause.)

GENERAL RENO: But let me tell you a story if you think two years is a long time. In 1978 our medical examiner in Dade County called me and he said: Nobody has ever bothered to look at the homicide records in the morgue to see why people get killed and to plan a strategy to deal with it.

We did that with 20 years worth of homicide figures and found that 40 percent of the homicides were related to domestic violence. We applied for an LEAA grant and the program

we developed was judged one of the best in the Nation. The State wouldn't take it over because it said that's not what a prosecutor's supposed to be doing. We persuaded the county to take over the funding when the program, when the LEAA moneys ran out, and that has continued.

For 15 years as I served as the local prosecutor I tried to get judges and police officers interested in domestic violence. You talk about a slow process. But if you were to go to that jurisdiction now, you would find a domestic violence court, police officers becoming more and more sensitive to how important these cases are, judges who are absolutely committed to the appropriate handling of these cases.

So sometimes it takes a long time, but don't give up.

MS. ROBINSON: Nancy Gist.

MS. GIST: I'd like to tell you briefly about the technical assistance to which Rae Ann referred. In support of the Department's community justice initiative, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, through the Center for Court Innovation and the Midtown Community Court in New York, has established a major technical assistance program.

It is accessible by calling the Midtown Community Court, by writing the Midtown Community Court, or through their home page, which is accessible at www.communitycourts.org. And I encourage you to contact them to learn about the array of technical assistance which is available, and also to visit the table downstairs in the Marketplace.

MS. ROBINSON: Thank you, Nancy.

Let's go up to the woman in the balcony.

MS. BRIGGS: Thank you. Good morning. My name is Kimberly Briggs and I'm one of your Federal prosecutors in the Northern District of California. I am part of a lot of community groups involving domestic violence, but I also handle drug task force cases.

In our community, our communities are being killed by people that come into our country illegally and do the drug trade. My community is concerned and we need some action by your office to delineate what rights citizens have in this country in terms of motions to suppress and in terms of people who sneak over the border, live here, and deal drugs to our kids, where they fit in.

I know that the communities can work together, but on that, in that issue, we need your help and the Department's help to ensure that the right cases are getting in front of the courts, so that our communities will be cleaned up.

GENERAL RENO: Just let me know how I can help. Give me a call at 514-2002 and let me know what specific delineation you're referring to, and I'll be happy to follow up on it.

MS. BRIGGS: I've met with Seth Waxman at your direction. I just wanted to remind you of the important issue we have in California and all the border States about this issue.

GENERAL RENO: Well, I can assure you that it is an important issue around the country, because after it leaves California it's hitting Iowa, Nebraska, Illinois. It is a problem for all of the Nation.

One of the important things is to recognize that it has got to be a balanced approach. You've got to go after the traffickers, but we have got to make sure that we provide treatment programs that can make a difference for all Americans.

MS. BRIGGS: Thank you.

GENERAL RENO: And too many people today are desperately pleading for treatment and can't afford it, and we have got to make sure we've got enforcement, intervention, and prevention in an appropriate balance.

(Applause.)

MS. ROBINSON: Because our time is limited, please keep your questions very brief.

Sir?

JUDGE ORCO: Thank you. Good morning. I'm Judge Raymond Orco from Hartford, the State of Nikeesha Sales. I want to welcome you.

We are presently opening a community court, which in my opinion represents a tremendous shift in the direction of justice in the State of Connecticut and in the United States. Is it your opinion, Ms. Attorney General, that this particular process which is now opening will continue beyond your administration and in the future? Is there support in Congress for this particular direction and will it be maintained?

GENERAL RENO: I can't ever forecast what Washington will do.

(Laughter.)

GENERAL RENO: But I am a firm believer that when something is right, when it involves

people, when it gives the people a real chance to participate in their government, it's going to last. But I think the key ingredients to proving it successful, so that Congress and State legislators and others will continue to support it, is, number one, plan the whole picture, because inevitably when I find a good program that someone says is not working, I look at it and find that a piece is missing, that you may have a wonderful community justice program, but inadequate drug treatment facilities to which you can refer somebody who is before the court in a community setting, or instances like that.

The second is to explain to people just what you're doing. Too many times in government, we just simply don't explain, either to Congress, to our State legislators, or to the citizens we serve. And the more we can take the creativity in this room, the innovation that has already occurred in your communities, and make people understand how successful it's been, we can make a difference.

JUDGE ORCO: Thank you.

MS. ROBINSON: Ada.

ADA: Good morning, Madam Attorney General. Greetings from the Pueblo of Hamas. You do have an Indian name also. The Attorney General did a village meeting for us, and it's more a description than just one little name. Your name is "Lady Messenger of Hope."

GENERAL RENO: Better than "Rumor-Bearer."

ADA: Right.

(Laughter.)

ADA: So your name is Hope.

And Laurie, I want to thank you for ensuring us a seat at this table. I'm very happy to be here because this national movement is the closest thing, community justice is the closest thing, that I've seen mainstream society come to reflecting indigenous justice systems in Native American and Alaska Native communities.

I think what we really wanted here from you is in what ways, not only funding because I know that many of you are funding efforts in our communities, but we have other barriers like policy at the national and State level that create barriers for us to be able to have justice systems that are truly reflective of us.

One of the things that we have to do in Indian communities is that we have to re-image our tribal courts to be reflective of who we are as Indian people, so that we are dealing and

applying justice that is truly meaningful and culturally appropriate and sensitive to deal with the children, youth, and family issues that we have to deal with.

What can all of you tell us, ways that you will support the development and the enhancement of indigenous justice systems, because that I think is one of the things that we really want to do?

GENERAL RENO: As you know, we have developed an Office of Tribal Justice to address these issues, and are focusing on the court system. We're working with the executive committee of the Judicial Conference of the United States, as well as the State Chief Justices Conference, to reach out to judges across this country, State, Federal, and tribal, to help start conversation and dialogue between the different sovereignties so that we can honor and protect the tribal traditions that make tribal justice so effective when it's done right and when it's done with resources that are appropriate.

Laurie and the Office of Justice Programs have done some wonderful things in terms of making sure the tribal voices are heard.

One of the things that you can do, though, with so many different tribes across the country, some 400, trying to deal with each with appropriate respect to sovereignty is just a mechanically difficult problem, and the more tribes can identify commonalities and help us organize so that we respect each tribe but deliver the best technical assistance or the dollars that are available in the best way possible, I think that would be extremely helpful.

MS. ROBINSON: Judge Orlando.

JUDGE ORLANDO: Thank you, Laurie. My name is Frank Orlando. I'm from Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Madam Attorney General, thank you for making this possible.

My question relates to what appears to be a tremendous resource that's developed called the Community Court, especially the one I've learned so much about lately in New York in Time Square. It appears that next year, through Shay's office, that we will be getting in Florida a tremendous increase in our community policing dollars that will be available in our communities.

I'm wondering if we will be able to use those dollars to take that Community Court concept and bring it to communities that don't have the financial resources that a Time Square Business Association has, so that we can bring that concept into the communities where the quality of life has really been diminished over the years, to improve it for the people who live there and the people who may want to go there.

And how do I get my colleagues in the black robe on that bus back to the community,

rather than bringing them to the sterile courtroom that I left a while ago?

GENERAL RENO: Shay, do you want to?

MR. BILCHIK: Judge Orlando, I think you're referring to the juvenile accountability incentive block grant program, that really is even broader than community policing. This is money that will come in to the States during the current fiscal year that can be spent on anything from the front end of the juvenile justice system into the court system and then into alternative corrections, traditional corrections, probation, and aftercare.

So the short answer is yes. These are resources that can be spent on developing programs that can be housed at a community court. What that money will not be able to support is the prevention side of what you might want to do in a community court project, which is a key part of the concept. So while that is a critical $250 million investment in the types of things that can support community court development, it's still missing one part that we're arguing strongly for in the current year, which is the prevention component that could also support that concept.

MS. ROBINSON: Stephanie.

MS. TUBBS-JONES: Good morning, Attorney General Reno. Stephanie Tubbs-Jones, Cuyahoga County prosecutor.

In these sessions we always have an opportunity to ask something of you. My question is, because you've been such a leader in providing clarity to many criminal justice issues that have kind of died on the vine, what can we do as a group to be supportive of you?

(Applause.)

GENERAL RENO: You're doing it. You can let me know -- now, don't all call 514-2002 or Bessie will quit.

(Laughter.)

GENERAL RENO: But you can let me know how we can be more effective in delivering the technical assistance that we can provide, how we can better address your issues that may be particular to your community.

I again stress the fact, start assuming that you have no additional dollars and see what you can do being creative before you go looking for the dollars. Then what you'll discover is: Okay, the private sector filled in this, the county filled in this, the State this, the U.S. Attorney came and did this, a local treatment program used drug prevention and treatment dollars

here, the school did this, etcetera.

I mean, it's just amazing when you start putting the pieces together. You need a youth center, you don't have enough money to build it. It always used to frustrate me to leave a city commission meeting where they were demanding that the city commission build a youth center, and drive past a school that was locked and barred at 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon.

(Applause.)

GENERAL RENO: So look at it all. And then you'll find the little piece: Oh, but we don't have any Federal moneys. Yes, but it does involve domestic violence. Could we access moneys at the State level that were Federal moneys from the Violence Against Women Act? What about a drug court here? What about the moneys -- just help us be creative in fashioning the dollars and the right way for you.

How do you persuade people? Just keep talking loud and long. But what people are going to object to, they're going to say: Look, we're all for community courts, but we haven't seen -- you've been in operation for two years and we haven't seen any reduction in crime in your neighborhood. One of the reasons you haven't seen a reduction in crime in our neighborhood is perhaps because more people are reporting crime because they have a greater confidence in the system. And if you can help us measure and evaluate and explain, and also explain to people that the concept of community justice cannot be built overnight, that can be important.

But just do what you all are doing. It is tremendous.

MS. TUBBS-JONES: Thank you.

MS. ROBINSON: We have time for only one more question. I'm going to turn to the woman up in the balcony.

MS. SCHLANGEN: Thank you very much. I'm Nancy Schlangen. I'm chair of the Deschutes County Board of Commissioners in Bend, Oregon.

My question, your last answer covered some of it, but our frustration at a local level that has embraced community justice, that believes in the managed care system: We have found a sort of a block at the State level. What is the Department of Justice doing and what can we do to turn about the States' system of how they are? They're thinking in the old system. They haven't opened up.

GENERAL RENO: Let me think about that. Noel, if you'd make sure that I follow through on that. I have an idea, but I don't want to put the man on the spot. So I'll call you and let

you know what my idea was and whether it worked or not.

MS. SCHLANGEN: Thank you very much. Thank you.

MS. ROBINSON: Nancy, you spoke to me about that last night, and I think that the issue that you raise is a very good one, one that we from OJP, as an example, in working with State agency heads can sensitize them to. I know we also have a number of representatives of State organizations here today and State agencies, and I think to engage in dialogue over the next few days about some of the specific kinds of barriers and impediments that you're encountering, that this is an opportunity to do that and to help educate us about the specific kinds of things that can be done.

MS. SCHLANGEN: Thank you very much.

GENERAL RENO: Laurie, let me point out one thing. About two and a half or now it's probably three years ago, I had the opportunity to talk with the State Conference of Chief Justices. They said that they wanted to become more involved, that they thought that they had played an important role in the spread of drug courts, that they thought that they could do much more. And they invited me to speak at a conference in Williamsburg.

I talked to them about community justice, and their response was extraordinary. They're trying to find ways to get it done, to break down barriers, and they will be, I think, generally a very supportive group in that effort.

MS. ROBINSON: Shay?

MR. BILCHIK: Just a quick addition to that is the symposium that OJP will be sponsoring with the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment later this spring on managed care issues, where a lot of those things will be discussed at the State level and how it plays out at the local level. And we need to pay attention to that, particularly as it relates to providing treatment for juvenile offenders, because the managed care contracts that agencies enter into will dramatically impact how we deliver services to the delinquents in the system.

MS. ROBINSON: Now, I think we could sit here all afternoon asking the Attorney General questions, but unfortunately she has a tight schedule and I've promised to keep her on it.

GENERAL RENO: Well, for those people that are in line, I'll be right over there and I'll answer your questions.

MS. ROBINSON: Let's join in thanking the Attorney General.

(Applause and, at 12:05 p.m., end of town hall meeting.)