



# Department of Justice

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STATEMENT OF

JANET RENO  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
UNITED STATES SENATE

CONCERNING

HOPE FOR TOMORROW:  
CRIME PREVENTION FOR AT-RISK CHILDREN

PRESENTED ON

APRIL 26, 1994

Chairman Biden, members of the Judiciary Committee, it is a privilege to be with you today to speak about one of the key elements of any serious anti-crime effort -- establishing and nurturing prevention programs that work. I believe that we are at one of those rare points in history when a nonpartisan consensus develops regarding what needs to be done to address a critical national problem. The problem is crime, and, while we will continue to debate the details, a consensus is emerging that successful anti-crime efforts require a balance between law enforcement efforts, certain and appropriately severe punishment, and strenuous efforts to keep young people from beginning on the path of crime and diverting those who have begun down that path.

This Administration is committed to working hand-in-hand with the Congress, governors, mayors, police, community leaders, teachers, parents and youth to rid our streets and neighborhoods of the crime plague. We have a plan to fight crime. A plan that adopts the growing national consensus that effective anti-crime efforts must be balanced. A plan that is largely reflected in the provisions of the Senate and House Crime Bills which many members of this Committee will soon be working to reconcile in conference and which we all hope will quickly be enacted.

The key components of the President's anti-crime program are police, punishment and prevention.

- We must put more police on the nations streets and get all of our police to work in partnership with their communities to reduce and prevent crime;

- We must assure that convicted violent, repeat criminals are punished swiftly and severely and that other offenders, particularly first time offenders, receive certain appropriate punishment so that they learn that crime does not pay; and
- We must guarantee that we have in place effective crime and drug prevention programs that will give young people something to which they can say yes.

Before turning specifically to today's topic of prevention programs, I would like to briefly highlight what we are doing in the other areas of policing and punishment. I want to take this opportunity because I believe its important to continually emphasize that an effective crime fighting program requires all three elements -- we need to speak of each at every opportunity.

### MORE POLICE OFFICERS AND COMMUNITY POLICING

The President wants to help communities hire an additional 100,000 police officers over the next five years. The Crime Bill authorizes the money to hire these desperately needed new law enforcement officers to help prevent and reduce crime and expand community policing.

Now, some are arguing that America's towns and cities do not want or cannot afford these new officers. I think those who make this argument are out of touch with the situation around the country. As you know, the President's successful Jobs

Bill included one hundred and fifty million dollars (\$150 million) to help communities hire more police officers. The response from around the country has been overwhelming. The Department of Justice received in excess of 2700 applications from communities around the country for the assistance available to help hire approximately 2000 officers. Every place I have traveled since the program was begun nearly the first question I get from local officials is when will they get their new officers. This is hardly the reaction of communities that don't want help to hire more officers.

While putting more officers on our streets is essential to reestablishing the sense of security that is absent in too many communities, equally important is better, smarter police work by police who work hand-in-glove with their neighborhoods to win the battle against crime and drugs block-by-block, community-by-community. Community policing has reduced crime and tensions in cities and towns and rural communities from Los Angeles to Gaston County, North Carolina, to Joliet, Illinois and St. Louis, Missouri to Baltimore, Maryland and back to San Diego. The community's help can effectively multiply law enforcement resources and provide essential neighborhood support for cops on the beat.

Community policing, moreover, also can play a central role in implementing comprehensive community based prevention initiatives with officers, for example, using a problem-solving approaches to addressing to correct situations contributing to the local

crime rate, by participating as part of multidisciplinary teams, and by working directly with high risk youth.

### CERTAIN PUNISHMENT THAT FITS THE CRIME

In addition to putting more officers on the streets, we need to back our police officers, prosecutors and judges by providing for swift and severe punishment for violent, chronic offenders, as well as certain and appropriate punishment for all who commit crimes. The pending Crime Bills provide many of the necessary elements of improved punishment:

- Creation of a targeted "three strikes you're out" provision which focuses upon the repeat violent offenders who commit so much of the crime that plagues our communities and establishes the principle that those who will not stop preying on our communities will not be released back into those communities;
- Helping the states to build the prison space necessary to insure that no violent offender is ever released early for lack of a prison cell;
- Reestablishment of a workable, constitutional death penalty for the most heinous crimes; and
- Fostering creative intermediate sanctions, such as boot camps, that provide first time offenders with both punishment, so that they learn that society will not

tolerate criminal behavior, and the education, training, discipline and treatment, when necessary, that can enable them to take advantage of the opportunity to begin anew.

## **PREVENTION**

I would like to turn now to the specific topic of today's hearing, prevention programs. As I stated at the outset, effective prevention programs are an essential component of a comprehensive balanced program to fight crime in America. The bipartisan consensus that is developing over the need for prevention programs provides us with both a great opportunity and a great responsibility.

We have the opportunity to develop and nurture programs which can give young Americans the employment, recreational and educational alternatives to crime that they so desperately crave.

We have the opportunity to break the cycle of violence that so often begins with children seeing violence against their mothers by family members by doing something serious about domestic violence and other forms of violence against women.

We have the opportunity to support parents who are attempting to instill within their children the self-discipline and self-respect that will enable them to be productive and law abiding citizens, because we must always remember that, whatever

the government does, caring parents and strong families will always remain the principal crime prevention program.

We have the opportunity to help those who have taken the first step down the path of crime turn around by making it clear to them through appropriate punishment that society will not tolerate criminal behavior while simultaneously providing them the treatment, skills, education, and discipline that will allow them a chance to succeed.

We have the opportunity to prevent the substance abuse that underlies so much criminal behavior with effective demand reduction programs such as DARE that can keep our kids from starting drugs; and through treatment and monitoring programs, in and out of the criminal justice system, provide a real chance for those who have begun use and those who suffer from hard core addictions.

The Crime Bills passed by the Senate and House contain numerous programs which take advantage of the opportunity presented by the growing consensus that we must seek to prevent crime. Among those programs are

- The President's Youth Employment Skills program "Y.E.S" contained in the House bill which will give young people something to say yes to by providing job training and opportunities to those in hard-hit, high-crime areas.

- The Ounce of Prevention programs included in both the Senate and House bills which provide a mechanism for coordinating the federal governments efforts to provide educational and recreational alternatives to drugs and crime such as keeping schools open after hours to serve as community centers and expanding after school activities, such as Boys and Girls Clubs, that keep kids safely off the streets.
- The Police Partnerships for Children program in both the Senate and House bills that encourages police officers to become involved with children and family services agencies to divert at risk children.
- Drug Court programs which will support intensive court supervision of drug dependent defendants to provide the carrot and stick approach that can help them beat their addiction.
- The Gang Resistance Education and Training program ("G.R.E.A.T.") which helps kids fight the allure of gang membership.

This is only a partial listing of the prevention programs in the two Crime Bills; there are many others, too numerous to mention, equally deserving of attention. My point is not to pick and choose, but rather to demonstrate that the ideas are there waiting for us to act.



While we have a wonderful opportunity to act, we also have a tremendous responsibility to act wisely. I believe that in order to truly take advantage of the opportunity now presented, the conference reported Crime Bill should contain full authorization level for prevention programs contained in the House bill. This will be money well spent to prevent crime, but in these times of fiscal restraint we must insure that the money is spent well.

The first step to spending the money well is to see that it is spent on programs with elements that have been demonstrated effective. While I am a staunch supporter of prevention programs, I am also a hard-nosed realist. Every effort to establish a prevention program is not a success. Even programs which succeed in one place may not work in another. We therefore must insure that scarce resources go to programs that rely upon proven elements while preserving the flexibility to see those elements combined in innovative ways to meet local needs.

The Committee's efforts in conducting this hearing and publishing its catalogue are a tremendous contribution to directing resources to proven programs. You have identified programs that work and held them up for all to see as models to be followed and adapted to local conditions around the country. In my view, this is one of the essential roles of the federal government and you are to be commended.

In addition to showcasing successful programs, spending our money well requires that we coordinate the federal government's efforts. We simply cannot afford the duplication, waste and bureaucratic infighting that too often accompany government programs. We must work together across agencies and levels of government.

I have seen this coordination work in the PACT (Pulling America's Communities Together) Project initiated by the Departments of Justice, Education, HHS, HUD, Labor and the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) in four jurisdictions. The PACT Project is designed to facilitate communities in the process of building comprehensive jurisdiction wide strategies, aimed at reducing violence. The federal role in PACT is a supportive one. Federal agency representatives provide information about programs that offer hope of success to the jurisdiction as their strategies and program ideas are being developed. This includes information about program operation and evaluation. The federal agencies also coordinate the delivery of existing program assistance to these communities. Conversely, input to the Administration through this planning and implementation process has a positive impact on Federal program development. The PACT Project calls for a more interactive relationship between the federal agencies and local communities -- in the process of policy and program development, in providing technical assistance and information on the best practices known to the Federal Government and in making communities aware of every possible funding opportunity available to them to help implement their ideas. These coordination needs and functions will be increasingly important as we work to

implement the crime bill and other major prevention-related initiatives. While coordination requires hard work, the preliminary results with P.A.C.T. convince me that it's well worth the effort. I trust that through the Ounce of Prevention Council and other means we can achieve similar success in cooperation and coordination.

### **CONCLUSION**

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before the Committee on the important topic of crime prevention programs. Working together, in the nonpartisan spirit that led to Senate passage of a Crime Bill, I am confident that we can build upon the consensus that in order to successfully fight crime, we must work to prevent crime.