

1 SPEECH

2 by

3 ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO

4 to

5 THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS 41ST CONVENTION

6
7
8 Washington, D.C.

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10 1:10 p.m.

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(1:10 p.m.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you so very much.

Of all the opportunities I have had to speak in these last 15 months, few have meant as much as this to me.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: For it was in 1971, when I worked as staff director of the House Judiciary Committee in Florida, that I came to understand the force and effect of the League of Women Voters. We were engaged in the revision of the judicial article of the Florida constitution, a subject that had been very difficult up until that time. The rest of the constitution had been revised, but the judicial article had failed in revision attempts because of the power of many judges.

I saw a network across Florida of women who were members of the League, who formed together to make sure that the revision was passed. And it is still in effect today, a living, evolving document that reflects so much of the effort of the League of Women Voters.

I watched as I would come to town, to talk to mayors, to talk to a group, to persuade them that they should vote for the constitutional amendment. And I would be met by League representatives who could give me savvy

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1 political advice on how to deal with people, and talk
2 about principle and theory in ways that it should be done.

3 It was at that time that I joined the League,
4 because I had never seen such an effective community
5 organization in action in all my time until that point.

6 (Applause.)

7 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: And since then, I have
8 seen the League in Florida at work in so many different
9 ways. My sister, now in her 19th year as a county
10 commissioner in Florida, will tell you of the League's
11 work in water management, in so many different areas. It
12 is just truly a wonderful privilege for me to be here
13 today with so many people who care. But, beyond caring,
14 so many people who are so principled and, beyond
15 principle, so many people who are so effective at getting
16 the job done.

17 Thank you.

18 (Applause.)

19 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: And you have
20 demonstrated that effort here in Washington. And I see
21 your footprints everywhere. As I travel from office on
22 the Hill to administrative office, I see the results of
23 your work.

24 Your efforts to ban assault weapons was
25 tremendous.

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1 (Applause.)

2 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: You sensed where America
3 was going and you led the way. And you proved that it
4 could be done. Your work in the National Voter
5 Registration Act has just been splendid. But it is so
6 important to see what you have done. You not only helped
7 to get a good, solid act passed, but then you followed up
8 immediately to make sure that it is implemented and
9 enforced.

10 You came to see the assistant attorney general
11 in charge of the civil rights division to say, look, we
12 need to do more. We are going to be at January 1st, and a
13 number of States have not complied; what can we do now to
14 get the show on the road?

15 As a result, we followed up with announcements,
16 with letters to State election officials and State
17 attorneys general. But it is an example again of the
18 League, committed to process, committed to getting the job
19 done.

20 And with that in mind, I would like to challenge
21 you in an effort that you have probably already
22 undertaken. It is difficult to get people to talk about
23 it, because it is a matter of process. But it is a matter
24 of process that is at the heart of this great Nation --
25 federalism.

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1 When I came to Washington, I thought I would
2 lose my sense of community. I was worried that I would
3 not be able to go to community meetings, that I would not
4 be able to sit down with police officers on the front
5 line, social workers with overwhelming caseloads, public
6 health nurses who were staggering under disease and
7 epidemic. And I was concerned. I thought, will I lose my
8 sense of people, my sense of community?

9 I was worried that, as I came to Washington, I
10 would be swallowed up in a Federal bureaucracy that too
11 often did not work together. I do not think that is
12 happening. But I think all of us have got to be involved
13 in a new undertaking -- how do we return government to the
14 people?

15 (Applause.)

16 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Can everybody here?

17 Okay.

18 That is a big undertaking. There is a statement
19 on the building, the east side of the Department of
20 Justice's building, that says, "The common law is derived
21 from the will of mankind, issuing from the people, framed
22 by mutual confidence, and sanctioned by the light of
23 reason."

24 I think, too often, many Americans do not know
25 what Title VII's and motor-voter bills and so many other

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1 efforts passed by Congress mean. We hear the law and
2 programs and procedures referred to in Roman numerals and
3 alphabets and symbols, without talking to the American
4 people about what the law really does. We sometimes make
5 the civil rights law seem ominous to people, without
6 talking about its marvelous liberating effect.

7 We make the Americans with Disabilities Act seem
8 forbidding, when really we can comply quite easily, and
9 open up great new vistas for so many people if we talk in
10 small, old words that people can understand.

11 So, I came to Washington resolved to see what I
12 could do about that. And the first effort I think we have
13 got to undertake is to make sure that Federal agencies
14 come together and work together in a cohesive and in a
15 coordinated manner.

16 I used to sit in Miami and go to a meeting, and
17 there would be three Federal agencies there. They did not
18 know what each other was doing. They did not know about
19 each other's programs. They overlapped, duplicated and
20 fragmented. I mean, it made no sense. And the U.S.
21 attorney, too often, did not know about any of the
22 programs.

23 I think it is important, and my fellow cabinet
24 members have been wonderful -- because I think they share
25 the same feeling. HHS, HUD, Labor, Education, and Justice

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1 are coming together to try to form their programs in a way
2 that mesh with community programs and mesh with each
3 other.

4 We find that Justice has conflict resolution
5 monies and, for public schools, Education does. We want
6 to work together to make sure those two programs are
7 meshed together to make sense.

8 We need the League's attention to detail and
9 your effectiveness and your understanding of process to
10 help us work through years and years of cultural overlay,
11 where each department seems to operate within its
12 bureaucracy on its own.

13 We need to make sure that the family
14 preservation effort in the Department of Health and Human
15 Services is linked with the family strengthening effort in
16 the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention,
17 so that we develop a national agenda that can give
18 children a chance to grow in a strong and positive way.

19 But then we have got to do more. We have got to
20 realize that the Federal Government is not going to solve
21 the problem. When I would go to these meetings, even if
22 they did not know what each other were doing, they sure
23 did have a good idea about what I should be doing or the
24 local community should be doing.

25 (Laughter.)

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1 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: And they would tell me
2 so. And they would tell me they had a wonderful grant,
3 but, sorry, I did not qualify for the grant because I
4 could not meet these conditions, because I already had
5 something in place for that and I just needed it for a
6 slight variation.

7 And I recognize more than ever that communities
8 understand their needs and resources far better than we
9 understand them in Washington, a 1,000 or 3,000 miles
10 away. And I wonder how this happened -- how the focus
11 came to be on Washington. And I have thought about it a
12 lot in this last year.

13 And I think what happened is that with the
14 Depression, people began to look to Washington as a source
15 for power for solving their problems. With World War II,
16 people became even more convinced that Washington would
17 solve their problems. With the civil rights efforts of
18 the fifties and sixties, people looked to Washington for
19 justice. In the seventies, they looked to Washington for
20 money. In the eighties, they kept looking to Washington,
21 but Washington was shifting the programs to the States
22 without the dollars.

23 And what has happened in the last eight years in
24 America is that communities, with their back up against
25 the wall, are starting to be creative and bold and

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1 learning to do more with less, and how to be more creative
2 and imaginative and bold and innovative. And exciting
3 things are happening in America's communities today. And
4 we have got to tap those strengths and those bold
5 innovations, and make them become true across America.

6 (Applause.)

7 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: There are many efforts
8 under way -- the empowerment and enterprise zone effort
9 that the Vice President is leading will become a reality
10 within this next year. Our PACT program, where the five
11 agencies have joined together to work with cities to show
12 how we can work with them in addressing needs and
13 resources identified by them, is beginning to take shape,
14 and it is exciting.

15 There are individual programs, where we are
16 looking to communities to say, look, what do you need?
17 How can we support you?

18 We are in the process of forming a great new
19 partnership of federalism -- a partnership where the
20 Federal Government is not telling people what to do, but
21 saying, look, involve all the people in your community.
22 Develop a needs and resource assessment. Develop a plan.
23 And then let us see how we can work together. But there
24 are ingredients of that effort that must be made clear.

25 The community who sits in a city commission

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1 chamber and says, this is our community's needs, these are
2 our community's resources, this is our community's plan,
3 will fail. The city commissioners that go out to the
4 neighborhoods, go out to start hearing the people, all of
5 the people, including that single mother in a housing
6 project who feels disenfranchised, including that
7 community activist that screams at county commissioners
8 and city commissioners all the time -- screams at local
9 prosecutors, too.

10 (Laughter.)

11 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Start involving all of
12 the people. Start talking to young delinquents in
13 detention facilities and ask them the question, what could
14 have been done to prevent the problem in the first place?
15 The cities and the communities of America that are
16 beginning to work are listening to the people. And we
17 have got to translate what they hear to Washington, and
18 put together programs that respond to the people.

19 (Applause.)

20 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: There are initiatives
21 underway that must be enacted in Washington in order for
22 us to succeed. Health care has got to be addressed as a
23 national issue.

24 (Applause.)

25 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: And, again, the League

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1 has been wonderful in its leadership efforts in that
2 regard. Welfare reform. The whole issue of the ban on
3 assault weapons and weapons that can cut across State
4 lines need to be addressed as a national priority.

5 (Applause.)

6 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: But we can do so much if
7 we join in this partnership -- in a partnership that is
8 marked by focusing on prevention programs. And America
9 must stop waiting for the crisis to occur. We all know
10 that a dollar spent up front is going to save us three
11 dollars down the line in health care costs, in tragedies
12 and injury and disease.

13 (Applause.)

14 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We have got to become
15 more effective at selling the idea. If people do not care
16 because of common humanity, we have got to let that
17 hard-nosed businessman know that unless he makes this
18 investment now, we will never be able to build enough
19 prisons 18 years from now.

20 (Applause.)

21 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Unless he makes an
22 investment in prenatal care now, he is going to be paying
23 a lot more in taxpayers' dollars down the road. And if he
24 does not care about it from that point of view, we have
25 got to let him know that unless we make an investment in

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1 children in America today, we will not have a work force
2 that can fill the jobs that he has that can maintain his
3 company as a first-rate company and maintain this Nation
4 as a first-rate Nation.

5 We have all got to join together to sell that.

6 (Applause.)

7 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We have got to trust
8 people. We have gotten so caught up in process because we
9 do not trust people that we cannot do anything. You
10 cannot do this and you cannot do that, and you have to
11 fill out this paper first and that paper first, and you
12 have got to measure this and do this report and do this.
13 And you are so spent in trying to comply with the process
14 that you are not engaged in looking at this remarkable
15 outcome that you have set for yourself and doing
16 everything bold and creative necessary to achieve that
17 outcome.

18 (Applause.)

19 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We have got to deal with
20 an issue that I see now more than I ever saw before. I
21 was 365 miles from the nearest State border and all I had
22 around me was bay and ocean. And so you did not think
23 about regional issues as much as you do when you live in
24 Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia, and suddenly New Jersey is
25 across the way and Delaware is just down the road, and you

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1 have got to think, if I have an impact here on crime and
2 just force it across the border, that is not going to
3 help. How do we develop new and creative ways of planning
4 regionally?

5 We have got to address something that does not
6 even effect government somehow or sometimes. And that is,
7 how do we adjust the work places of America to recognize
8 that the family is the best care giver of all, and that we
9 can free family time to put children and family first,
10 while at the same time being a more productive Nation? We
11 have got to address this issue.

12 (Applause.)

13 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: As part of this
14 partnership, we have got to explore new areas -- areas
15 that are being charted now and where wonderful work has
16 been done. For so long in America, K through 12 has been
17 a magic number. It was the magic number because so often
18 the family fulfilled the responsibility of educator in the
19 first five years, and we did not need it.

20 Now, with both parents working, with single
21 parents working, with children too often neglected but not
22 sufficiently neglected to be determined to be dependent,
23 we now have to focus on zero to five, expanding Head Start
24 to zero, recognizing that those first three years are the
25 most formative time in a person's life.

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1 (Applause.)

2 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: You know, I came here in
3 February of 1993. I was sworn in on March 12th. The rest
4 of the cabinet had been in place. They had already had
5 their retreat. I did not know the President beforehand.
6 I did not know the company line. And I was asked
7 questions and asked to speak, and so I opened my mouth and
8 talked about what I had been talking about in Dade County,
9 which was zero to three. The Washington press corps that
10 covers the Justice Department looked at me like I was
11 crazy.

12 And I got questions: What does the Attorney
13 General have to do with zero to three? And I explained
14 what the child development experts at Jackson Memorial
15 Hospital, our public hospital in Miami, had taught me, and
16 how delinquency and dependency could be addressed there
17 far more effectively than delinquency and dependency
18 programs 10 years down the road.

19 And they looked at me skeptically but kept
20 asking. Now, it is so wonderful to see the Carnegie
21 Foundation's Starting Points come out, to see people
22 talking about it throughout the Nation. And you think,
23 gee whiz.

24 (Laughter.)

25 (Applause.)

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1 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We have got to develop
2 mechanisms or encourage States or communities to develop
3 mechanisms that make zero to five as magic as K through
4 12, that make afternoons and evenings, when children are
5 so at risk, times when we must focus on them. We have got
6 to focus on that 40-year-old person who is out of a job,
7 because America's jobs will be changing ever so rapidly,
8 and one becoming obsolete, so that we have retraining,
9 which is as much a part of education as K through 12 and
10 zero through five.

11 We have got to think of school-to-work, and make
12 sure that our kids graduate with skills that can enable
13 them to earn a living wage. We have got to think of new
14 and bold concepts that nobody is better at doing that than
15 the League and nobody is better at doing that and seeing
16 it gets done than the League.

17 We have a golden opportunity. So much has
18 happened in Washington that makes it seem like it truly is
19 possible. The first legislation passed and signed by the
20 President was the Family Leave Act -- key to the
21 development of a strong and positive future for our
22 children and for their families. Health care has to get
23 passed to give our children and their families a chance to
24 grow in a strong and constructive way.

25 We have got to make sure that we have educate as

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1 part and parcel of children's lives. Working in
2 partnership with the private sector, with communities, we
3 can do it.

4 We have got to make sure that every child in
5 America is immunized. We have got to preserve families,
6 rather than tearing them apart through foster care
7 programs that cause drift after drift and month after
8 month of a family disintegrated, rather than a family put
9 together in a strong, constructive way.

10 We have got to support the schoolteachers of
11 America.

12 (Applause.)

13 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Something is terribly
14 wrong with a nation that pays its football players in the
15 six-digit figures.

16 (Applause.)

17 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Pays a lawyer going to
18 Wall Street, right out of law school, \$60,000 or \$70,000 a
19 year, and pays its schoolteachers what we pay them,
20 considering what we ask them to do. We have got to start
21 --

22 (Applause.)

23 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: It is so wonderful to me
24 to see my young friends graduating from college. Their
25 parents are lawyers. These kids want to be

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1 schoolteachers. And I think there is a new feeling across
2 this Nation that a schoolteacher can be so special and can
3 make such an extraordinary difference.

4 And when the assistant attorney general for
5 civil rights in the Department of Justice can stand up as
6 he is being sworn in and describe how he grew up, raised
7 by his mother and his grandmother in the south side of
8 Chicago in a housing development, and that is was his
9 sixth grade teacher, whom he then introduces to the
10 assembled group, who taught him that he was special, and
11 it was his eighth grade teacher who saw that he was
12 special and got him into a program called Better Chance,
13 that sent him to Harvard College and to Harvard Law
14 School, you know the magic that schoolteachers can work in
15 this world. Let's get behind them.

16 (Applause.)

17 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Let's get truancy
18 prevention programs organized. It is so frustrating to
19 hear the police say a good truancy program reduces daytime
20 burglaries. But, Ms. Reno, what do I do when I am getting
21 picked up for truancy at 9- and 10-years-old, taken back
22 to the school and the school just sends him home on the
23 bus because his momma will not come to get him? I say,
24 let's get our communities organized so that the teacher,
25 the police officer, the social worker, and the public

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1 health nurse do a home visit together to find out what is
2 happening.

3 And if we start knocking on doors then, we are
4 going to find that 23-year-old woman who was a teen mother
5 who has lost her sense of hope, lost the sense that there
6 is a light at the end of the tunnel, lost the sense that
7 she can get her high school degree, that she can be
8 somebody, and is beginning to slip into crack addiction --
9 we can make the difference and stop it there.

10 Let's start focusing on how we craft an
11 environment where people can grow to be self-sufficient,
12 where that welfare law can be changed to let that mother
13 know that when she goes to get a job, she is going to be
14 somebody, that she will not be worse off than if she had
15 not gone to work in the first place because of a welfare
16 law that makes no sense.

17 (Applause.)

18 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Let us recognize what is
19 happening in America, a tragedy that Marian Wright Edelman
20 has called the worst crisis for young black children in
21 America since slavery.

22 Ladies and gentlemen, this is 1994, but hear her
23 message and then look at the Center for Disease Control's
24 figures for 1992. There were 17 per 100,000 deaths for
25 young white males age 15 to 24. There were 37 per 100,000

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1 deaths for all young males in that age group from
2 homicide. There were 159 per 100,000 deaths for young
3 black males in that age group who died as a result of
4 homicide. And in most instances, the assailant was the
5 same race and the same sex. It started from an argument.
6 It was usually not felony related. They usually knew each
7 other. It was usually alcohol involved -- not drug
8 involved. And it was usually done with a firearm.

9 Let's step in and start changing their world,
10 and give them a chance to grow in a strong, constructive
11 way. We have so much.

12 (Applause.)

13 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: But what about the
14 perpetrator? What about the perpetrator of violence? At
15 14, sent to a school for youthful offenders. There for
16 nine months at the most, in most overcrowded juvenile
17 facilities. Returned to the community without after-care
18 follow-up, job training and placement. Nothing done to
19 continue to address the drug problem in the first place.

20 Let's make sense out of America's juvenile
21 justice system. And if we have waited until it is too
22 late, so that the child is declared delinquent, let us
23 then make sure that that child is returned to the
24 community with a half a chance of success after he comes
25 back through job training programs and other support

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1 mechanisms that can give him a fair, fresh start. But let
2 us not give up on any generation in America.

3 (Applause.)

4 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: But I think we all have
5 to take stock and remember that it is not government, even
6 government that is local, that is going to do it. The
7 answer ultimately lies with the American people. And it
8 ultimately lies with the American people starting to put
9 children and families first throughout this Nation.

10 I look at all that the League does in terms of
11 volunteering. I look at the volunteers that I knew in
12 Miami, and the countless hours they gave to the League and
13 to other great endeavors. Let us not give so much that we
14 forget the ones we love most at home.

15 (Applause.)

16 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I remember my afternoons
17 and evenings, after school and during the summer. My
18 mother worked in the home; my father worked downtown. My
19 mother taught us to appreciate Beethoven's symphonies, to
20 play baseball, to bake cakes. She spanked us and she
21 loved us with all of her heart. And there is no child
22 care in the world that will ever be a substitute for what
23 that lady was in our life.

24 And yet I look now at all the young men and
25 women struggling to get breakfast on the table and the

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1 children off to school and the homework done and the
2 children bathed and the dinner on the table. They do not
3 have quality time with their children. Let us all work
4 together to make sure we have time for those we love.

5 (Standing ovation.)

6 VOICE:

7 Yes, please state your name and where you are
8 from.

9 QUESTION: Nancy Hester, President of the League
10 of Women Voters of Dade County.

11 (Applause.)

12 QUESTION: First, I would like to say how proud
13 we are of you and how very pleased I am to be able to make
14 that comment in this convention.

15 (Applause.)

16 QUESTION: And, second, I would like to ask you
17 to comment on immigration. That is an issue of very grave
18 concern for the State of Florida and for a number of
19 States represented here at this convention. We are really
20 interested in some insight on Federal policy regarding the
21 control of illegal immigration up front, and any proposals
22 for reimbursement for social services provided to illegal
23 aliens in this country.

24 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: First of all, it is
25 great to see you. Because not only is she the President

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1 of the Dade County League of Women Voters, but our
2 families have known each other all of my life.

3 (Laughter.)

4 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: As I told the Senate
5 Judiciary Committee, I think immigration will probably be
6 the most critical problem I face as Attorney General,
7 except probably for youth violence, which, again and
8 again, is an issue that has to be addressed.

9 We have very clear policies. First of all, we
10 think we can make a difference and can have an impact on
11 illegal immigration through beefed-up efforts of the
12 Border Patrol and the whole processes of government.

13 Secondly, we want to focus on criminal aliens,
14 on those that take up a lot of prison space and cause a
15 lot of problems throughout America. We have instituted
16 with the State of Florida a very novel process, where we
17 are identifying illegal aliens in the State prison system.
18 If Florida would just as soon have them gone as
19 incarcerate them, we are trying to identify them and get
20 them deported immediately.

21 At the same time, we have improved our
22 institutional hearing process so that even when the State
23 wants them to serve the full sentence, they will be
24 immediately deported because the deportation proceedings
25 will have already been commenced.

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1 We are beefing up our efforts in terms of alien
2 smuggling, which is a major problem all along the south
3 Florida coast. The U.S. attorney has just returned some
4 significant indictments. And we are trying to give them
5 the tools to do the job by creating a close working
6 relationship with the other Federal agencies and the
7 Immigration and Naturalization Service.

8 We are taking steps to make sure that the asylum
9 process works correctly. I was amazed -- if I had run the
10 Dade County criminal justice system the way the
11 Immigration and Naturalization Service was run, without
12 automation, without the infrastructure, I do not see how
13 the very dedicated men and women working for the Service
14 have so often been able to do their job. They are trying
15 to provide an increased number of asylum officers,
16 streamline the process, make it fair, and get the job done
17 while at the same time adhering to constitutional due
18 process on the part of all asylum seekers,

19 We are trying to identify what I call asylum
20 fraud -- the boilermaker applications that are obviously a
21 sham -- and we are taking effective action against those
22 who would perpetrate that fraud in an organized way.

23 We are looking at employer sanctions, first of
24 all, to make sure that they are enforced, but, as with the
25 National Voter Registration Act, to try to make the law

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1 easily susceptible of compliance, to try to provide for
2 employers telephonic verification systems so that they
3 can, by telephone, verify that this person, who has a
4 number of identifying pieces of information, is in fact
5 legally in this country, but, at the same time, taking
6 effective enforcement action against employers who
7 consistently hire illegal aliens and who know absolutely
8 what they are doing.

9 And, finally and as importantly, to make sure
10 that we improve the process for legal immigration, and
11 make that a dignified, appropriate, fair process. I had
12 so many friends in Miami who suffered through delay after
13 delay and uncertainty in terms of the naturalization
14 process.

15 I am dedicated to doing everything I can to
16 address the issue of how we build an Immigration and
17 Naturalization Service that has the management structure
18 and the infrastructure and the technology to get the job
19 done right. I have a splendid Commissioner of
20 Immigration, Doris Meissner, who is doing a wonderful job.
21 And my job is to back her up. Because she knows a lot
22 more about immigration than I do.

23 With respect to the issues close at hand, we are
24 working with all the other agencies involved, the
25 Department of Defense and the State of Florida, to address

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1 the issue of those seeking asylum in Haiti. And we expect
2 that that plan will go into effect shortly.

3 With respect to the social services and the
4 State's expenses, the Congress, about eight years ago,
5 authorized the Federal Government to compensate the States
6 for criminal aliens detained in State prison systems, but
7 they never provided any money.

8 (Laughter.)

9 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: And in the last eight
10 years, no administration has asked for the money. We have
11 a \$350 million request pending before Congress for that.
12 And we hope that that will be provided. We think that if
13 you take that money and then try to get out of prison
14 those that the State does not want in the prison, we can
15 come close to meeting the needs.

16 With respect to the social services, the
17 administration is working with the Urban Institute to
18 identify -- we do not want illegal aliens here, but they
19 are here, and in many instances, they are contributing to
20 the revenue of a State through employment, through sales
21 tax, through any number of other contributions -- and what
22 we are trying to determine is, in working with the States,
23 the big States, the most impacted, what is an appropriate
24 formula. And the administration is committed to trying to
25 work something out that would be fair to all concerned.

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1 QUESTION: Thank you.

2 (Applause.)

3 VOICE: Microphone four.

4 QUESTION: Jacqueline Jacob-Berger, North San
5 Mateo County, California.

6 You have just answered most of my questions that
7 I had on my list for you, and I would like to express my
8 appreciation for those remarks.

9 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Well, let me add one
10 dimension, because it really did not affect Dade County,
11 and I wanted to try to be as specific as I could. On the
12 Southwest border, it was very interesting, because there
13 did not seem to be any rhyme nor reason for the deployment
14 of Border Patrol agents along the Southwest border. They
15 would be put out on the border without a car or a radio.
16 They did not have the technology that would make them more
17 effective. It did not seem to be well planned.

18 I have made two visits to the border now -- one
19 to San Diego and one to Nogales. And what we are trying
20 to do -- we started in El Paso with a very thorough border
21 effort. We have now extended that to San Diego, since
22 between those two points of entry, they account for about
23 65 percent of the apprehensions. It is already beginning
24 to work in San Diego.

25 Even one of my most -- she has been wonderful to

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1 work with, but Senator Feinstein is a great advocate for
2 the people of the State of California, because she is
3 constantly calling me. And she was recently on the
4 border, and says that she is seeing the difference. And
5 many other people are as well.

6 We have got to be prepared, as traffic patterns
7 shift. But we are going to try to do it right. We are
8 getting the infrastructure. They are getting night lamps,
9 infrared scopes, automation. We are getting the agents to
10 the field. And I think it is making a difference for the
11 first time.

12 QUESTION: I did have one little question, if I
13 may.

14 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Oh, you can have a
15 question.

16 QUESTION: One of the objections -- our League
17 is pushing for a study of immigration -- and one of the
18 objections is that it causes racial and ethnic
19 discrimination when we begin to make serious efforts
20 against immigration. Could you give us some ideas about
21 how to respond to that complaint?

22 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Well, first of all, in
23 terms of a commission on immigration, Barbara Jordan is --
24 her commission will be making a report shortly. And I
25 think she has -- I have had occasion to meet with her, as

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1 the chairman of that commission, and I think that they are
2 doing some fine work.

3 I think that tension exists. We are all a
4 nation -- almost all of us -- are a nation of immigrants.
5 And it is a great tradition. This administration is
6 committed to protecting that tradition, and doing it the
7 right way by supporting legal immigration, while at the
8 same time taking steps to end illegal immigration, but
9 doing that in a manner that is consistent with due process
10 and consistent with basic principles of human dignity.

11 That includes, for example, there are a great
12 deal of tensions on the Southwest border, again, and we
13 have tried to set up a citizens advisory panel that can
14 advise and do outreach for the commissioner in terms of
15 addressing these issues. And the whole issue of employer
16 sanctions -- many people feel they are discriminated
17 against because employers will not hire them because they
18 are afraid of the sanctions, although they are perfectly
19 legal.

20 These are a lot of the issues that we have to
21 work through very carefully. What it is most going to
22 require of all Americans is that they remember where they
23 came from. And that when the pitch and the hysteria gets
24 too high about immigration, people like the League step in
25 and say, let's look at this the right way.

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1 VOICE: Thank you.

2 Microphone three.

3 QUESTION: Thank you very much. My name is
4 Virginia Agee. I represent the State of California, San
5 Francisco League. And I am delighted with the fact that
6 we are able to discuss the subject of immigration. I am a
7 native San Franciscan, third generation of a family of
8 five generations, so I am a descendant of the pioneers of
9 California. And mine is to ask your recommendation or
10 your position on proactive positions.

11 Like my previous speaker, there is that hysteria
12 and paranoia going, and especially for people of color.
13 If we are visible there is the assumption that we are just
14 recent arrivals and that question of doubt of whether we
15 are legal or illegal concerns me. And I would like to get
16 your views of proactive, being at the positive end of
17 prevention. And the comments you made about dignity is
18 very important, and I would like to get your views on that
19 and what could be done through the League.

20 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think that the League
21 can do much. It will depend to some extent on
22 communities.

23 Let me give you an example of where I have seen
24 community outreach and outreach on the part of the
25 immigrant community. In Omaha, I visited with a group of

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1 community activists who had been outraged at Immigration
2 for coming in, picking up youngsters out of high school
3 and deporting them back to Mexico. Their parents were
4 here legally; the kids were not. I do not know all of the
5 circumstances.

6 There was a terrible tension in the community,
7 and it went both ways. This group started working with
8 others in the area, and started doing outreach, explaining
9 the legal processes, working with Immigration, working
10 with other community groups in terms of providing
11 translation at outreach programs held on Saturdays at the
12 school gymnasium -- just getting people to start talking
13 and working together.

14 Anything the League can do in terms of
15 generating community understanding is imperative. And
16 part of it is America has got to understand how its
17 demographics are changing. I know from my own community,
18 it is hard to say. It is going to take a different
19 approach depending on different circumstances. But the
20 more the community and groups like the League can do to
21 reach out and say, whoa, we are a nation of immigrants.
22 Let us prize that tradition. Let us work together to stem
23 the tide of illegal immigrants. But let us, at the same
24 time, treat all with respect and dignity.

25 And I think it extends beyond the issue of

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1 illegal immigration. I think it extends -- the whole
2 issue of hate crimes, the whole issue of bigotry is going
3 to become a more difficult issue for this Nation, and it
4 is going to require all of us to speak out against it.

5 (Applause.)

6 VOICE: Microphone six, way over here.

7 QUESTION: My name is Christine O'Sullivan, and
8 I am from Westport. I am currently the President of the
9 Westport League of Women Voters. I am also a former
10 assistant prosecutor of Hudson County, New Jersey. And so
11 I identified very strongly with your certainly being the
12 first Attorney General, and my congratulations to you.

13 Of the problems of our country that seem to have
14 exacerbated increasingly since I was in the prosecutor's
15 office, I think that violence is our most important
16 problem. I see in our League handouts and our directories
17 and our workbooks for this session that there are seven or
18 eight items that contain elements of violence, crisis in
19 the cities, violence intervention and things like that.

20 Since you have learned that you have the power
21 of the word, perhaps you might be in a position to suggest
22 across the country that we establish a program, through
23 the schools, of teaching the principles of nonviolence.
24 Other countries do not suffer the way we do with street
25 violence, crime, with an attitude of disrespect for one

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1 another.

2 I think that there are methods to teach
3 nonviolence. I think that dignity and tolerance for
4 differences is important and part of those lessons. But
5 if you were, as you did with respect to birth through
6 three, stress the importance of young child care, also
7 stressed the importance of early childhood education in
8 the principles of nonviolence, I believe we would be well
9 on our way to working towards another way of living.

10 Thank you.

11 (Applause.)

12 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: First, let me caution
13 you, because you fall into a trap that I sometimes fall
14 into when I think of violence as the greatest problem I
15 deal with, because it is the greatest immediate problem.
16 But violence, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, teen suicide,
17 youth gangs, this youth violence that we see is a symptom
18 of what I think is the greatest single problem that
19 America has faced since World War II. And that is that
20 for too often we have forgotten and neglected our
21 children.

22 (Applause.)

23 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I have a little
24 grandniece, two years old, and it has been good because I
25 see her about every three months, so I can see the

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1 dramatic changes. And I can see how that child has been
2 taught in those first three years not to bite, not to hit,
3 not to throw things.

4 (Laughter.)

5 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: And I watched the love
6 that that child has. And I remember what the child
7 development experts taught me -- that the concept of
8 reward and punishment is developed during the first three
9 years of life, a conscious is developed during the first
10 three years of life. Fifty percent of all learned human
11 response is learned during the first three years of life.

12 So, with that caveat, then let me go to tell you
13 that I have been speaking regularly on the issue of
14 conflict resolution. We are working with Secretary Riley
15 of the Department of Education to make sure that juvenile
16 justice and delinquency prevention dollars that are
17 available in the Department of Justice are coordinated
18 carefully with conflict resolution dollars for the same
19 issues from the Department of Education, and that they are
20 used as wisely as possible.

21 Dade County public schools had marvelous
22 conflict resolution programs in some, but not all, of its
23 schools. What we are trying to do is to see what works
24 and what does not work. There is a study underway here,
25 started interestingly enough by a public hospital that had

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1 a large number of trauma cases -- gunshot wounds, youth
2 violence. And they went out with research dollars to the
3 local surrounding schools to develop a conflict resolution
4 program. And they are doing solid evaluations on it in
5 conjunction with I think the University of Colorado.

6 So, there is a lot underway. And we are hopeful
7 that more can be done to make it a fact of life in public
8 schools throughout America.

9 (Applause.)

10 VOICE: I am afraid that this will need to be
11 the last question. We will need to get the Attorney
12 General back on her schedule. So, microphone two -- and I
13 am sorry, it will be the last question.

14 QUESTION: Thank you. Eileen Nedelson of New
15 York City and the New York City League.

16 I would like to revisit the question again on
17 immigration, this time with a more specific note towards
18 the home care and domestic workers. And I would like to
19 hear your opinion on how you feel about the illegal status
20 of these women, and whether or not you think the
21 circumstances surrounding this issue has a disparate
22 impact on single mothers and women on a career path.

23 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think we need to all
24 address that issue. I do not have any specifics for you
25 on that particular point. But I think in terms of so much

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1 of what we do, it goes back to making the law easily
2 susceptible of compliance, so that people can understand
3 how to do things without getting mixed up in a mesh of
4 paperwork and other problems. And I think if we do that,
5 we can address the need for appropriate child care.

6 I think, however, that the long-range issues of
7 child care have got to be addressed in a far more
8 comprehensive way, to make sure that we know the people
9 who are caring for our children, that we train them
10 correctly to care for our children at this very sensitive
11 age, and that we address the problem of child care in a
12 more comprehensive way than just considering this issue.

13 VOICE: Please join me in thanking the Attorney
14 General.

15 (Standing ovation.)

16 (Whereupon, at 2:00 p.m., the Attorney General's
17 speech concluded.)
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