



ADDRESS TO THE 66TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

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RENO, NEVADA

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9:45 A.M.

MS. RENO: Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor.

When I left Miami in 1993 very suddenly to come to a job I had not expected to have, I thought that I would lose my sense of community. And I regretted that. I regretted in advance the opportunity to go to neighborhoods that I knew, to work with citizens who wanted to make a change, to make a difference for the community I loved. But instead of losing a community, I have, thanks to so many in this room, gained community after community across America where I have begun to feel at home.

I have watched you in your communities, so many of you in this room, where you are making such an incredible difference. You have an energy, a spirit, a vision that is contagious.

I come back to Washington having been to a community, to a neighborhood where a crime prevention program is working, and the mayor is there leading it. And I say yes, we can do the job here in Washington to give that mayor and her colleagues the opportunity to make a difference.

There is a can-do attitude amongst mayors. I've said before that I think something has happened extraordinary in these last 60 years. Up until the Depression, people looked to the local leaders to solve their problems. With the Depression, people looked to Washington for solutions. With the war, people looked to Washington more often. In the '50s and '60s, they looked to Washington for civil rights enforcement. In the '70s, they looked to Washington for dollars for grants. And then suddenly, in the '80s, Washington started shifting the programs to the states, but without the dollars. And the states started shifting the programs to the

community, without the dollars.

And mayors across this country, with their backs up against the wall, produced that can-do attitude that has made this such a great nation. You brought people together and said, okay, if we don't have the money, let's end the duplication and the fragmentation. Let's work together. Let's have teachers and police officers and businessmen together in this effort.

You've done it in such an extraordinary way. As I look at municipal financing today, it takes a sophisticated financier to be a mayor. Seems to me a mayor has to know everything. You have to know about law enforcement. Now education. Roads, city planning, the latest technology, wireless communication, and even the vagaries of federal legislation and how it's going to affect you.

But what has impressed me so much about what you do is the way you care about people. I will always remember, Mayor, going to the Weed and Seed site with you shortly after I became Attorney General. And here was not just a public official, here was somebody who cared about the people she was serving. And I see it again and again in what you do.

You are there when tragedy strikes. You are there when bombs go off. You're there when people need you. And I just want to salute you all as America's models of public service.

But I want you all to keep me on my toes. The same mayor who took me to the neighborhood to teach me also reminds me when I haven't delivered. And I try always to deliver what I've promised. But sometimes 3,000 miles away it's difficult. So I ask you all to be my eyes and ears and let me know when there's not been follow-through or when you have a suggestion as to what I can do to be more effective in your community.

We have taken giant steps against violent crime. It's down six years in a row. The Federal Government has not tried to take the credit or claim the turf, but instead we've tried to forge a partnership with state and local law enforcement; checking with you, working with you to improve in every way possible the community policing program. Working with states and local communities in the Violence Against Women effort. Developing comprehensive community programs. Making sure that the Brady law was carried out to prevent people from purchasing guns.

But, the problem of juvenile crime still exists. It is still there at the forefront on the evening news as we see the tragedy of school violence in this country.

Children are more alone and unsupervised than at any time in our history, according to the Carnegie Foundation. It is probably harder to grow up in America today than at almost any time in our history, as children are unsupervised while at the same time they face greater risk and perils, whether it be methamphetamine, guns, or just despair.

From the mid-80s through the mid-90s, juvenile crime and delinquency increased steadily. But now it's down two years in a row, the juvenile arrest rates for homicide and for violent crime, generally.

Now, what we might do in the past has become complacent and say, well, we've solved that problem, let's move ahead, let's look at other issues. We cannot become complacent. If we stick to this problem, if we don't let it go, if we continue to address it, I think we can make a difference in this nation.

The overall levels of violent crime amongst juveniles remain about 50 percent higher than they were 15 years ago. And the number of young people is going to continue to increase in these next 12 years.

But mayors are at the forefront again. You have developed sensible enforcement programs in your communities, with graduated sanctions, with prospects that let a young person know they are going to be accountable.

But, chief, I disagree with you. There has been work on prevention. And it has been the mayors leading the way. And it is the mayors who are showing this nation that prevention programs can work. You are making an honest woman of me, because when I came to Washington I said youth violence was the single greatest problem we faced and that we needed to develop a balanced program, and you are making that come true.

When we watch what you are doing on a limited scale, with the monies you have, I don't think anyone can doubt that prevention programs can work. They can save youth from committing crimes that destroy their lives, and they can save youth from being the victim of the bullet.

I welcome the resolutions you are considering, and I salute you again for your leadership.

With respect to juvenile crime, we want to continue to be your partner. We don't want to claim the credit. We want to be the partner and say how can we develop that two-way street where we provide dollars and technical assistance and support in every way possible. You know your needs and resources better than we do. You don't need the Feds coming to town to tell you what you should be doing or what your best programs are. You know that better than we do. But what is important is that we develop a plan.

Prevention programs are not going to work in the long run if you and your communities develop an excellent program for after-school children for ages six to nine and then suddenly there is no program for nine- to twelve-year-olds, and they get into trouble and people say,

see, the earlier program didn't work.

The chief said it: We're going to have to start at the beginning and reweave the fabric of community around children and family at risk, children who are troubled, children who cry out for help in the silent ways that we have come to observe. We have got to make sure that the people are involved in the development of this plan, that you address and inventory your needs and resources, and then you come to Washington and say, okay, now I don't need that particular type of grant, but we, because we have a great private not-for-profit corporation doing some wonderful work in that area, I need it more like this, can we work something out? We need to have that flexibility so that we meet your needs in developing a comprehensive program that takes our children from their beginnings to job opportunities that can enable them to earn a living wage.

To do that, I think you need a dedicated stream of funding for juvenile justice prevention, for prevention for delinquency. You have been able over these six years, five years now, to look to monies for community policing. But you've never been sure what you get or might not get with respect to juvenile crime prevention. Let us work together to make sure that we help to fashion legislation pending in Congress that ensures that you will get monies that will enable you to design programs in your community that can truly prevent crime. We must push for this and we can make a difference.

Now, the chief said that mayors have to be courageous. I think you're courageous every day of the year when I consider the challenges that you undertake. Some people say you can't address the problem of prevention because it makes you sound like a social worker. Well, I have talked about prevention since I first became a state attorney in Miami in 1978. As Mayor Helmke pointed out, I got elected five times.

If you talk to the people and tell them facts, they're going to appreciate what you're talking about; that for every dollar invested in prevention, you're going to save three and four dollars down the line; that for every dollar invested in prevention, you're going to save a life who otherwise would get into the system and never come out. For every dollar in prevention, you're going to save, somewhere down the road, some life that might be the victim of crime. And if that doesn't appeal to your voters, for every dollar in prevention you're going to raise a more educated person who will have better skills, who can fill jobs that can enable your company to maintain itself as a first rate company.

If we talk sense to the American people, they always buy it. We have to keep doing that. And the mayors are leading the way.

What are the ingredients? You know best. But let me suggest to you ingredients and opportunities that we can have if we had a balanced juvenile justice piece of legislation, balanced between enforcement and prevention, with a dedicated funding stream that assured

you that programs you started today could be carried out tomorrow.

Obviously there has to be strong enforcement. There's got to be graduated sanctions. There's got to be after-care and follow-up. It makes no sense to have a juvenile justice system that sends a 15-year-old who has been in detention for six months back to the apartment over the open air drug market where he got into trouble in the first place, where both his brothers are drug users. What do you think is going to happen? He's going to be right back in.

A lot of prevention can be focused on these young people coming out of the system and the development of community parole programs to match community policing programs in effective and innovative ways.

But then there is prevention. And the ingredients are clear. Early childhood is a critical time. The facts are in, ladies and gentlemen, that abuse and neglect, that the child who watches his father beat his mother, all of these are factors that are going to contribute to delinquency down the road. If we have this dedicated funding stream that can give the mayors of America the opportunity to show what can be done, dollars could go into special programs for police officers to refer children who had been witnesses to violence, refer them for counseling to interrupt the cycle of violence.

Health care is essential. I have picked up too many presentence investigations where I have seen instances of health problems that caused emotional problems that caused the delinquency. Let us make sure that our children have appropriate health care.

I just want to thank you. I understand that you just confirmed the U.S. Conference of Mayors' participation in the Safe Kids Coalition, which is a coalition of private not-for-profit groups that care, the Justice Department, and now you, that will bring together networks of organizations representing the community, to start with five goals:

These five goals are to reduce truancy by one-third in at least 200 communities; provide after-school programs for at least 100,000 more children; enroll at least 500,000 eligible, but uninsured, children for health insurance. Sometimes it doesn't cost money. Sometimes it just means us coming together to use what we have to do the job.

Clearly, the ingredients of a positive, safe childhood free of crime include early childhood care, not just care, but educate. And then the schools. I'm so proud of what mayors across this country are doing. I can remember all my first teachers in the public school, first grade through twelve. They had such a profound influence on me. And the work that you are doing in education to highlight that is one of the critical professions, one of the critical undertakings in this country is so very important. And I look forward to working with you.

In those schools, we can do so much. You may -- if we can get this funding for

prevention, this dedicated stream of funding, you might decide that you want to start a conflict resolution program in the schools teaching teachers and police officers how to teach children to resolve conflicts without knives and guns and fists. Does it work, chief? I've seen it work, because I've seen what mayors are doing across this country to teach people. You might want to put it into a truancy prevention program. Your police chief may tell you, look, I pick 'em up, I take 'em back to school and all the school can do is send them home to mother because she won't come pick them up.

Let us develop a neighborhood team, you may say, with a community friendly police officer, a youth counselor, who makes a home visit to find out what the problem was in the first place. But you know your community better than we do. And it should be a funding stream that gives you the flexibility to design the program the way it should be done. Or it may be a teacher in that school that sees the signs of agony and anger, that sees the child and wants to do something before the tragedy of violence occurs. You may decide to set up a special program where that teacher can refer that student to try to address the problem before it multiplies into tragedy.

But then you have also recognized so many times over that children afternoons and in the evenings are so unsupervised. We need to work with you in every way possible to make sure that the children of America have a positive program that they can participate in during the hours they are unsupervised, with mentors who understand how difficult it is to grow up. Or you may decide that you need a piece of that money to invest in a program that gets guns out of the hands of kids. We look forward to working with you in every way possible to design both enforcement and prevention programs in this area that can make a difference.

Or it may be drugs. It may be a child obviously hooked. You may want to use drug court monies to fashion a drug court for youngsters in your neighborhood. Or it may be that you want to use a dedicated funding stream to provide monies to a coalition of citizens that have come together to focus on juvenile drug use. Or you may want to use it in prevention programs aimed at youngsters on the brink of getting into drugs. You know best. We need to work with you as partners in reweaving the fabric of community around America.

Or it may be a special gang intervention program. But just think of what we can do if we develop a balance, a balance that provides monies for community police officers and for sanctions and a balance that provides monies for prevention. You've shown what you can do with so little. Think of what we could do with more. And more that provides school-to-work opportunities, to give our youngsters a knowledge that there will be a job down the road and that they will know how to do the job and have the skill that can enable them to succeed.

We are at a great time in this nation. You have made this opportunity possible. But if instead of becoming complacent we renew our efforts, if we make an investment in our children in terms of solid prevention programs that can make a difference, that are community-

based and comprehensive and look at the child and the family as a whole, ladies and gentlemen, I think with the mayors' leadership we can change the culture of America, change it for a long time to come and not just the five-year blips that the chief has referred to. I think we can teach our children how to resolve conflicts without knives and guns and fists and create a far more peaceful society.

I think we can, through the use of Violence Against Women dollars that has been effective in so many of your communities, change the face of America so that domestic violence is no longer an accepted part of our culture.

It will require tenacity. It will require stick-to-itiveness. It will require all the good things that mayors have. And I believe, based on what I've seen in these five years as Attorney General, that the mayors will help lead the way to a far more peaceful country.

Thank you for all that you do.

(Proceedings concluded.)

STATE OF NEVADA,)

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COUNTY OF WASHOE.)

I, DENISE PHIPPS, Certified Court Reporter in and for the County of Washoe, State of Nevada, do hereby certify that I reported in stenotype the proceedings had of this matter previously captioned herein; that I thereafter reduced my said stenotype notes to typewriting, and that the foregoing transcript, pages 1 to 15, both inclusive, constitutes a full, true and accurate record of all proceedings had upon the said matter, and of the whole thereof.

Witness my hand as Certified Court Reporter this 24th day of June, 1998

DENISE PHIPPS, CCR #234, RDR, CRR