

1 THE HONORABLE JANET RENO
2 ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
3 SPEAKING AT THE
4 GREATER DALLAS CRIME COMMISSION
5 ANNUAL AWARDS LUNCHEON
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Dallas, Texas
Tuesday, January 18, 1994
11:45 A.M. - 1:15 P.M.
Loews Anatole Hotel
Grand Ballroom

25 Reported by Sonia Fancher, CSR No 5534

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1 Thank you, Governor, and my thanks to the
2 Crime Commission for inviting me to be here with you
3 today. A special thank you because for 15 years I
4 watched citizens in the community I love come
5 together week in and week out in times of great
6 crisis and crime and drugs and join together in the
7 Miami Citizens Against Crime and the Miami Coalition
8 to do what you are doing.

9 I know the time it takes. I know the
10 commitment it takes. I can imagine what it's like
11 going from around Texas and from Dallas to Austin to
12 talk to legislatures, to continue to fight, to make
13 sure the dollars were there. And to see a group like
14 this achieve what you have achieved gives me a
15 message of hope for the rest of this country.

16 In these last two days I have seen
17 something that has been extraordinary for me. I have
18 seen something that you as the Crime Commission has
19 served as a catalyst to generate, but I have seen it
20 throughout Texas. You are the biggest state in the
21 nation in terms of geography. You would be the last
22 state that I thought really had a sense of community
23 between the state and its communities, but you've got
24 it.

25 Yesterday I was in Beaumont and Port Arthur

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1 listening to innovative programs then underway. I
2 listened to the sheriff of Jefferson County describe
3 what he was doing. I came to Kyle yesterday and saw
4 drug treatment working. And I not only saw it
5 working with respect to the inmates there or those
6 that had graduated, but I saw it reaching out to
7 youngsters who were on the verge of getting into
8 trouble. And I watched inmates impart what they had
9 learned to these youngsters to keep them from getting
10 to where they had gone. I have seen things that
11 work.

12 This morning I watched a police officer
13 relate to 6th grade students in a remarkable program,
14 the LETS Program, that the Dallas Police Department
15 has initiated. And from all I hear from the mayor, I
16 am going to get a wonderful experience this afternoon
17 in Fort Worth with the Weed and Seed Program.

18 Texas is proving that crime fighting can
19 and is and will work. You have reduced crime, but we
20 cannot rest now. We have got to demonstrate through
21 what you have done that we can reduce it further,
22 make a difference, and have an impact.

23 Look at the ingredients and help me convey
24 to the rest of the nation how important it is. I've
25 met Republicans and Democrats. You are treating

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1 crime as a nonpartisan issue, an issue you approach
2 with common sense and good judgment and without
3 30-second sound bites. You are looking for
4 solutions. You are taking the long road to get to
5 them, and you are making them stick. You have
6 schools and police and social service agencies
7 working together in remarkable programs, businesses
8 contributing in every way. Just look at the business
9 interest represented here today. This morning I saw
10 the Mobile Store Front of the Dallas police. A
11 remarkable vehicle that can bring police to
12 neighborhoods in a flexible way that makes a
13 difference, and each one donated by business.

14 I watched a partnership with the federal
15 government that is pretty remarkable to me again with
16 the Dallas Police Chief, the Kennedale Police
17 Department, and Arlington participated with the
18 D.E.A., the I.N.S., and the D.P.S. in this remarkable
19 drug seizure that has now generated even further
20 seizures in the past 24, 48 hours. You are just
21 doing an extraordinary job of showing what happens
22 when people tear down the barriers and start building
23 trusting relationships that use the limited resources
24 we have as well as we can to fight crime in a common
25 sense way.

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1 You have put your money where your mouth is
2 and said we are going to be tough. We want to get
3 rid of those career criminals, and we are going to
4 build the prisons to do it. But you've understood
5 that you could never build enough prisons unless we
6 started focusing on drug treatment and did something
7 about that, and unless we started making inroads to
8 provide a safe constructive positive future for our
9 children of tomorrow.

10 I have been so encouraged when the mayor of
11 Fort Worth said, "We've reduced crime in Fort Worth."
12 I thought, well, it is just going to be Fort Worth,
13 but it is Dallas. It's around Texas. Texas has done
14 it. Texas in the middle of so many communities
15 across this nation having problems with crime,
16 escalates the demonstration that you can have an
17 impact.

18 I have an obligation to Texas now. I don't
19 know whether I can fund the money, Governor. You've
20 shown you can do it sometimes with nothing, but what
21 I want to try to do is bring -- do my part in
22 bringing federal agencies together so that we join as
23 a united front. So that you don't have to go to one
24 agency after another to initiate efforts, but that we
25 come together and we form a partnership with Texas

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1 and it's communities.

2 What is happening in America is really
3 exciting. I think with the depression people said
4 well Washington can do it all, and World War II made
5 people think that the center of power and all that
6 was good was happening in Washington. And then we
7 began to throw money at the problem, and some other
8 things didn't work. And then we shifted the
9 responsibility to the states, and the states without
10 money shifted the responsibility to the communities.
11 And look at what you are doing. Port Arthur was real
12 difficult, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston. All of you
13 are joining together in this precept initiative that
14 is so exciting.

15 You are designing it differently. Each
16 community is doing something differently, but you are
17 working together to harness the business interest,
18 the interest of volunteers, of individuals, of
19 police, of social service agencies, to make a
20 difference in crime prevention. We've got to harness
21 the federal effort to make ourselves as available to
22 you with resources that can count in ways that you
23 need them. We need to work together so that we don't
24 put conditions and tags and earmarks on programs so
25 that they are not useful to you.

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1 We've got to have HUD, H.H.S., the
2 Department of Education, the Department of Justice,
3 and the Department of Labor come together in a
4 comprehensive package that will work with you. We
5 have got to have the D.E.A., the F.C.I., the Market
6 Service Customs, the A.P.S., come together as one
7 comprehensive unit working with you, using each
8 agency the best way possible to achieve a true
9 partnership. But then we've got to look at that
10 partnership, and we have got to make a commitment as
11 partners that we are going to make it real. And
12 Texas is an example of how we can make it real.

13 We have got to say that violent crime is
14 the number one concern of all Americans. That we
15 have got to have a partnership between the state and
16 federal government so that the federal government
17 handles what is appropriate in federal court, but
18 backs up state and local law enforcement officials in
19 every way possible by sharing information, by
20 providing support, by giving the support for crimes
21 that cross state lines so that we get the job done.
22 We are committed to that effort. I think it is
23 underway here in Dallas with the leadership of Paul
24 Coggins and so many of the federal agencies, and we
25 look forward to continuing that effort in every way

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1 possible.

2 But then we've got to make a pledge
3 throughout America. If Texas does it, it's not going
4 to help when somebody gets out of jail early in
5 another state and drifts down to Texas for the nice
6 weather. We are going to have problems. All of us
7 in America have got to be committed to putting the
8 violent criminal away, the career criminal, and
9 making sure that we have truth in sentencing, and
10 those people stay away and are not released
11 prematurely to the community to pray on it again.

12 We've got to focus the efforts of all
13 agencies on the violent traffickers, on the gangs
14 that cross state lines to make sure that we interrupt
15 that cycle of violence quickly, swiftly, and get
16 those people put away according to the principles of
17 due process and fair play. But then we've got to
18 look at drug trafficking, and again use our resources
19 in the wisest way possible to make real inroads on
20 the traffickers. We can make a difference. We have
21 seen what you've done just in these last several
22 weeks in this remarkable seizure, in this remarkable
23 effort where people were in it together, people
24 willing to share credit, people willing to
25 participate, and it is the number of interagency

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1 efforts that can truly make the difference.

2 But there are other areas that we have to
3 look at. We cannot forget economic crime that
4 undermines our communities, health care fraud that
5 brings health care institutions to their knees.
6 Again all of us have joined -- will and must join
7 together in a comprehensive effort. I am so
8 impressed when I turn around and see what Attorney
9 General Morales has done in terms of his cooperative
10 extensions of an offer of assistance to Paul Coggins
11 where we work together, and people aren't claiming
12 credit. They are just saying let's get the job
13 done. It is this spirit of cooperation that I think
14 is so absolutely essential.

15 But you're in a situation in Texas where
16 you're not going to be able to build that many more
17 prisons, and you are already in a situation as I
18 observed in Jefferson County where you've got people
19 in local county correctional facilities because the
20 problem just keeps coming. Many of those people are
21 there because they have a substance abuse problem,
22 and in too many communities of this nation they have
23 been recycled through the prisons and back out into
24 the community. They have been sent to prison for
25 substance abuse problems, released to the community

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1 without drug treatment, without job training, without
2 placement, and guess what they do the day they get
3 back? We're going to be picking them up again. It's
4 sure as shooting.

5 Drug treatment can work, and the Crime
6 Commission is spreading that message. But we have
7 got to spread the message to the nation because there
8 are still people who believe it won't work. But I
9 suspect everyone in this room has been touched by
10 somebody family member, friend, neighbor, business
11 colleague, somebody who has benefited from drug
12 treatment. If it is done right as it is being done
13 in Kyle and other institutions in Texas, it can make
14 a difference. It can interrupt that cycle of drug
15 abuse which generates the crime, and we've got to
16 make a commitment to make it work.

17 But ladies and gentlemen, it won't work if
18 we say when you go to five weeks of treatment and
19 then back out to the community without the after
20 care, the follow-up, the support, and the issue of
21 jobs being addressed. We've got to make sure that as
22 we plan these efforts that we make sure that initial
23 investments of dollars are not waisted by programs
24 that have no after care or follow-up to ensure
25 success.

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1 We can never ever in this whole effort
2 against crime forget the victims. Federal government
3 sometimes tends to do things kind of like with fads.
4 They have a big push about victims and do a lot of
5 hoop-la, and then they go away. I am dedicated to
6 trying to do everything I can to work with local law
7 enforcement and local institutions to provide victim
8 support. We cannot forget them. We've got to keep
9 them advised, keep them informed, and keep them part
10 of the process. They are absolutely indispensable,
11 and they have rights too.

12 But as that we have got to all address --
13 and I would challenge the Crime Commission to
14 consider this, and I think you have. When I took
15 office in Miami 15 years ago, I did a study of all
16 the people who had been killed in the county over a
17 20 or 25 year period. I went through the medical
18 examiner's records and found a distinct correlation
19 between domestic violence, husband and wife,
20 ex-spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, that and homicide
21 A direct causal connection, 40 percent were related
22 to domestic violence.

23 We developed a domestic intervention
24 program. People weren't that interested. They
25 thought that wasn't a criminal justice problem. They

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1 didn't think we should focus on that, but I became
2 convinced that the child that watches his father
3 batter his mother comes to accept violence as a way
4 of life. I then started looking at the studies, and
5 the studies support that.

6 We have got to organize ourselves to let
7 people know that domestic violence perpetuates the
8 cycle of violence and cannot be tolerated. If we can
9 develop domestic violence intervention, we can make a
10 difference. We can help interrupt this cycle of
11 violence. But in all my experience in Miami as I
12 left the greatest single crime problem, and I see it
13 here in Texas, is this terrible problem of youth
14 violence. Not the violence of 16 and 17 year olds
15 alone but 13 and 14 year olds.

16 Ladies and gentlemen, we have all got to
17 join together to let the youth of America know that
18 there is no excuse whatsoever for hurting other
19 people, for putting a gun upside somebody's head and
20 hurting them. That they are going to face a fair and
21 firm punishment if they do it. I have had too many
22 police officers both in my home in Miami and around
23 the state say to me, "Ms. Reno, they just tell me,
24 hey, man nothing is going to happen to me. Nothing
25 ever happens to anybody in the juvenile justice

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1 system." We have got to devise a sanction that makes
2 a difference, that is fair.

3 But ladies and gentlemen, those punishments
4 will never work unless we understand that most of
5 these kids are coming back to the community, back to
6 the community without job training, back to the
7 community without skills, without the understanding
8 of how to live, without the skills to cope with the
9 very life itself. And unless we make our juvenile
10 programs the programs that provide a fair and certain
11 punishment with the after care, and the follow-up,
12 and the opportunity to return to the community with
13 skills that can enable them to succeed, we are just
14 generating a further revolving door.

15 But I suggest to you that all that we've
16 seen, youth violence, teen pregnancy, youth gangs,
17 teen suicide, and the drugs, all of this is a symptom
18 of a deeper problem in a society. One that we must
19 join together to address, and the fact that this
20 Crime Commission, this governor, this state, the
21 mayors that I talked to today at T-CAP are focusing
22 on it in a fashion that looks at the comprehensive
23 problem as a whole is one of the greatest and most
24 encouraging signs I have seen in the 10 months that I
25 have been Attorney General.

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1 Unless we make an investment in our
2 children, you will never ever be able to build enough
3 prisons 10 years and 15 years down the line to cope
4 with all the problems that we face today. We've got
5 to have the prisons. We've got to have the prisons
6 to get the bad guys who got there because of neglect
7 in the past off the streets so we can clear the plate
8 to get the job done. But it can't, Governor, be
9 waiting just until they begin to get into trouble or
10 just until they are truant. We have got to begin to
11 look at children as a whole.

12 I as a prosecutor can worry about not
13 having enough prisons 15 years from now. You as
14 business executives -- and many business executives
15 here will not have a work force 15 and 20 years from
16 now with the skills necessary to fill the jobs to
17 maintain Dallas, Texas, or this nation as first rate
18 institutions of government. Unless we make an
19 investment in children now, those elderly who are
20 here who say that's not my problem, I raised my
21 grandchildren, I helped do everything, we are not
22 going to have the work force with the skills
23 necessary to fill the jobs to maintain pensions in
24 America.

25 Health care institutions will be brought to

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1 their knees by the failure to provide preventative
2 medical care up front. This country for too long has
3 been a penny wise and a pound foolish. It has waited
4 until the crisis occurred before it did something up
5 front. It costs a lot more dollars to send somebody
6 to prison than to make an investment in children up
7 front.

8 I need your help. When people here me say
9 that they say -- some of them -- well, there's
10 Janet. She's a little soft on crime. I don't know
11 anybody who is a victim who would have preferred the
12 crime to happen than to have done something to
13 prevent it particularly when they know how to prevent
14 it at a lot less cost than taking care of it after it
15 occurred.

16 When we see programs initiated in our
17 prisons, in our juvenile facilities that take care of
18 it after the fact and if we had known we could apply
19 those programs up front, it's just plain foolish not
20 to start doing it. But it is a comprehensive program
21 because if we just do it piecemeal we are going to
22 waste dollars again.

23 We've first got to make sure that our
24 parents are old enough, wise enough, and financially
25 able enough to take care of their children. We've

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1 got to address the issue of teen pregnancy and do it
2 the right way so that we have strong and healthy
3 families which are the best care givers for children
4 around. We've got to make sure that parents have the
5 time to spend with their children to do the
6 constructive job and the difficult job that parenting
7 requires. We've got to make sure that every child in
8 Texas and in America has appropriate preventive
9 medical care.

10 Something is terribly wrong with a nation
11 that says to a 70 year old person you can have an
12 operation that extends your life expectancy by three
13 years, but then turns to the child of a working poor
14 person who makes too much money to be eligible for
15 medicare, that doesn't have health benefits, sorry
16 you can't get preventative medical care that's going
17 to save you from behavioral and other problems and
18 educational deficits down the line.

19 We've got to make sure that every child in
20 America has appropriate child care. You say what is
21 the Attorney General of the United States talking to
22 the Dallas Crime Commission about child care for.
23 Because every child development expert that I have
24 ever talked to says that the most formative time in a
25 person's life is zero to three when the child learns

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1 the concept of reward and punishment and develops a
2 conscious.

3 What good are all the prisons we are going
4 to build 15 years from now going to be if the child
5 doesn't understand what punishment is about. And
6 when you turn and talk to the chief of the Dallas
7 Police Department and talk with him about the endless
8 violence that you saw, the indifferent violence, the
9 violence that was totally indifferent to human life
10 on the part of a 13 or 14 year old, you understand
11 that they never had the building blocks to even begin
12 to build the values that are essential in a human
13 community. We have got to make sure that we have
14 education for our children, and I am so impressed
15 with what the Dallas school system is doing in terms
16 of innovative programs that are giving our children
17 an opportunity to learn.

18 I see the partnerships building as the
19 department of education is providing a grant to focus
20 on drug prevention and drug education, and these are
21 the types of programs that will focus on children and
22 give them an opportunity to grow in a strong and
23 positive way rather than through gangs. That can
24 make a difference.

25 Ladies and gentlemen, if it is proper and

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1 possible I invite you some day to go out to Kyle, to
2 listen to the young men, to the inmates, to listen to
3 people in the detention facility, to listen to
4 ex-gang members, and ask them what could have been
5 done to prevent the problem before you got into
6 trouble. If I had had something to do afternoons and
7 in the evenings. If I had somebody to talk to,
8 somebody who could understand how difficult it is to
9 grow up.

10 There are too many children in America who
11 if they had the best teachers in the world and the
12 best school system need something in the afternoons
13 and in the evenings, and what the Dallas system is
14 doing is just extraordinary in that effort. Too many
15 of these children don't have families as you and I
16 have known them. They don't have somebody to talk
17 to, to talk about what it's like particularly in a
18 world of mean streets and gangs and drugs.

19 We've got to provide that, and it saves an
20 awful lot of money down the line. We've got to
21 initiate truancy prevention programs throughout the
22 country so that we get children back into school, but
23 we find out what made them truant in the first
24 place. And we've got to realize that one of the most
25 important social services you can find is a good job

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1 for somebody, but you don't get good jobs unless you
2 get a good education and the skills necessary to fill
3 those jobs.

4 We've got to design programs that throw
5 dollars not just at a make-work job but throw dollars
6 into schools who work experiences that enable us to
7 analyze a child's aptitude interest in the 7th grade
8 and then design programs that let that child know
9 that if they follow that program they will graduate
10 from high school with a skill that can enable them to
11 earn a living wage through a program that permits
12 them both to learn in school and in the work
13 experience.

14 We can do so much if we understand what
15 raising children is all about. It takes love, hard
16 work, an awful lot of intelligence, and an awful lot
17 of luck. As we look at what we have done to our
18 children, too often we don't give them the guidance,
19 the love, the nurturing, the limits, the punishment
20 that they need. Families have failed them too
21 often. We can't be the best substitutes -- we can't
22 be a total substitute for the family, but we can try
23 to make it better. And I have seen programs in Texas
24 in these last two days that are doing that.

25 But the most important message of all is

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1 that as we concentrate so on our communities that we
2 love, that we never forget our families. I remember
3 my afternoons after school and in the evening. My
4 father worked downtown. My mother worked in the
5 home. She taught us to bake a cake, to appreciate
6 Beethoven's symphonies. She taught us how to play
7 baseball, and she spanked us. And she loved us with
8 all her heart, and there is no child care in the
9 world that will ever be a substitute for what that
10 lady was in our life.

11 And yet I watch young parents today rushing
12 to get breakfast on the table and the children off to
13 school and picking the children up at 6:30 and
14 getting dinner on the table and the homework done and
15 the children bathed. And Saturday running errands,
16 or Sunday doing something else. But not having
17 quality time with their children.

18 America should slow down a little bit and
19 remember that our most precious possession is our
20 children and our individual lives and our family and
21 our community. We've got to make an investment not
22 just in dollars and programs but in love and
23 nurturing and understanding.

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