

FOX "MORNING NEWS" INTERVIEW WITH ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO  
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BRIAN WILSON: It is the common consensus that crime is a major  
concern with voters. And with each recent election year, we've seen a  
passage of a crime bill. President Clinton travels to Ohio today to  
promote the principles of what he hopes to see in this year's crime  
bill. Joining us from the White House with the administration's  
perspective is Attorney General Janet Reno.

General Reno, thank you for being with us here this morning.

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Good morning.

MR. WILSON: A lot of talk, in recent days, about the "three  
strikes and you're out" provision. This is a major linchpin in the  
administration's proposal.

ATTY. GEN. RENO: It is an important provision because what we're trying to focus on are the truly dangerous criminals -- the three time armed robbers, the people who should not be let out of prison for the rest of their crime-producing you talk to police officers on the street, a lot of times they say, "Why should there be three strikes before you're out?" I mean, if you get a guy arrested on a major felony, shouldn't the guy do some time?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: What we have always tried to do is to make sure that we focus on all dangerous offenders. But for that three strikes you're out person, that person needs to be put off the streets for the

FOX "MORNING NEWS" INTERVIEW: Este of it, and they don't commit further crime. But if you've had three strikes, if you've had three chances, I think that's it.

MR. WILSON: The president will be travelling to Ohio today to more completely define his proposal. What are we likely to hear?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think you're going to hear the president talk about how important it is to get a crime bill passed now, to do it in a bipartisan way with common sense, fashioning a crime bill that goes after the dangerous offenders, puts 100,000 police officers on the streets of America in the next five years in community policing initiatives that have been proven successful. He will call for a ban on assault weapons that have no use for any sporting purpose. He will talk about the need for drug courts, for boot camps, for dealing with the problem of youth violence -- both in terms of letting youngsters know that 1 and it's now before the House, for the part. There was an article in the St. Petersburg Times reprinted in today's Washington Times that says that basically the Senate action took place with no real input from the Justice Department. Do you see that as being accurate?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: No.

MR. WILSON: Do you have any sense of why someone would report that?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I don't know why you reporters do things, but all I know is that we worked closely with Chairman Brooks and Senator Biden in trying to fashion a strong bill.

MR. WILSON: So, criticism --

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Much needs to be done yet.

MR. WILSON: So, criticism in that quarter from Capitol Hill that says, "You weren't involved," you just say, categorically, "That's not the case."

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I say, we worked closely with Senator Biden and Chairman Brooks. We have been working closely with Congress. And what our goal is to see a good crime bill passed, regardless of who gets the credit.

MR. WILSON: You're going to be testifying up on Capitol Hill a little bit later today on the Balanced Budget Amendment. What's your

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particular take on that issue?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I just want the Congress to understand the impact of the Balanced Budget Amendment on law enforcement initiatives in the Department of Justice, and let them know what cuts, what the significance of each cut, and what it's going to mean in terms of our law enforcement capability.

MR. WILSON: Well, give us an advanced headline. How does it affect the Justice Department?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think, if we have to absorb our equal share of the cuts in the fashion that is described, you're going to see a significantly reduced effort. You're not going to see new prisons. You're not going to see those police officers on the streets. You're not going to see prevention programs aimed at preventing crime in the first place. I think it can have a significant impact.

MR. WILSON: So, it's impossible, you believe, to have a balance budget and fight crime effectively?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think people must understand the balances that are needed and what is needed to be done to address the issue through exactly what the president and Congress are doing now in terms of standard process as opposed to Constitutional Amendment.

MR. WILSON: Quite a few nominees for the top 10 or so posts at the Justice Department are still unfilled -- even though you've been in the job for more than a year now. Are you being hampered by the White House's inability to bring up nominations and get them confirmed?

ATTY. GEN. REND: No, we've got some fine people nominated -- Deval Patrick, who many people are now getting to know, is just going to be a splendid person in Civil Rights, when he's confirmed. Lois Schiffer (sp) is doing a fine job in the Environmental and Natural Resources Division. Lori Robinson (sp) has been excellent in the Office of Justice Programs. And I'm very proud of the people we have there.

MR. WILSON: Also, there are some reports that you're going to cut back on personal appearances. Is that the case?

ATTY. GEN. REND: I want to do the best I can at making sure the Department is run as efficiently as possible, but I never want to lose touch with the American people and what their concerns are and the issues that are important to them. I think you can balance it both ways.

MR. WILSON. So, what is the balance? Did you do too much personal appearances earlier or too many personal appearances before,

and now you want to cut back a little bit? How do you find that balance?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I'm just going to do what I think is best from a day to day perspective, and make sure that I do what's necessary at home, and at the same time, listen to the people.

MR. WILSON: So, you're just trying to strive to find that balance, I gather?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think one has to do that every day of the year.

MR. WILSON: There have been some minor -- I mean, your press has been pretty good, but there have been some minor criticisms of your management style. Some people have described it as "scatter-shot." Other people say that you micro-manage on some issues, but don't micro-manage on others. How do you describe your management style? Let's set the record straight here,

MR. WILSON: I think it's important for me to understand what's going on in the Department of Justice. There are a wide range of issues. There are many problems that come up. I want to make sure that there are people in place who are addressing those problems. When I'm sure that the process is correct for addressing those problems, then I move on to the next point. If I'm not satisfied with that, I focus on that. If that be scattered, then I'm to blame. But what is important is that I try to understand that department and work with the dedicated men and women in it to do everything we can to serve the American people the right way -- efficiently, without a lot of guff.

MR. WILSON: And to those in the legal community and those critics that have written about you recently, you say?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: People criticize me, and try to say what Abraham Lincoln said, "If I read everything bad about what people said about me, I might as well close up the shop." (Laughter.) I intend to keep on doing the best I can, the best I know how, and if the end brings me out okay, that will be fine. If the end brings me out wrong, 10 angels saying I was right won't make any difference.

MR. WILSON: All right. Attorney General Janet Reno, thank you for being with us here on the Fox "Morning News" today.

MR. WILSON: Thank you.

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