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Address by  
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO  
to the  
NATIONAL PRESS CLUB  
1994 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION PROGRAM

Wednesday, March 16, 1994

National Press Club  
529 14th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C.

## P R O C E E D I N G S

(1:17 p.m.)

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2  
3 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: After that warm welcome  
4 I shouldn't criticize you, but when I pick up a magazine  
5 heralding my announcement of our new freedom of information  
6 policy and see a picture of Janet Reno on horseback at 17,  
7 I wonder about the accuracy of anything anymore.

8 (Laughter.)

9 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I am very privileged and  
10 proud to be with you today. I have had many occasions in  
11 this past year to think of the famous quotation from Thomas  
12 Jefferson: "Were it left to me whether we should have a  
13 government without newspapers or a newspaper without a  
14 government, I should never hesitate a moment to prefer the  
15 latter." What I did not know when I took office, however,  
16 is that Thomas Jefferson said this before he became  
17 President of the United States.

18 (Laughter.)

19 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Following his election,  
20 President Jefferson had something very different to say:  
21 "I shall never take another newspaper of any sort. Nothing  
22 can now be believed which is seen in a newspaper."

23 (Laughter.)

24 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Well, as of last Saturday  
25 I had been in office in a year and I still -- I think I take

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1 five newspapers and I read them and I don't know what I  
2 would do without them.

3 I'm also reminded, though, that we all remember  
4 another Englishman, John Milton's axiom, "truth will always  
5 win out in a free and open encounter," conveniently  
6 forgetting that Milton later became the powerful censor for  
7 Oliver Cromwell. I hope by my pronouncements that it does  
8 not forecast that I will be a censor, but I suspect that the  
9 people who are in this room will prevent that from happening  
10 should I ever have any inclination in that regard.

11 But the experiences of Jefferson and Milton and  
12 countless others through history, and certainly my own  
13 experience after 15 years in Dade County, is that it is far  
14 easier for government officials to talk about openness than  
15 it is for them to actually kick open the doors, particularly  
16 where government officials have to balance competing  
17 interests of national security, the right to fair trial, and  
18 so many other balancing problems that are part and parcel  
19 of the job.

20 But President Clinton and I are dedicated to  
21 trying to make openness in government a reality. Not only  
22 are we articulating a broad philosophy of open government,  
23 but I am prepared, he is prepared to do whatever is  
24 necessary to implement the new openness policies throughout  
25 the Federal bureaucracy and make them a reality. The

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1 President and I are under no illusions. We know how  
2 difficult it is to implement change in a government  
3 bureaucracy. We are working long and hard at doing and  
4 everything we can to give the American people the  
5 information and access that are their rights.

6 I think it's important for us all, for the media  
7 as well -- because I have trouble and I've had trouble this  
8 past year learning all the alphabets and who's what and what  
9 this group is and what this group is. And there are many  
10 Americans that don't know what FOIA is, that it's the  
11 Freedom of Information Act. It is important for Attorneys  
12 General and for the media to write and talk in terms that  
13 all America will understand.

14 I've been out throughout America. People care  
15 deeply about their government, they want to understand  
16 what's going on, and we both have a responsibility to put  
17 it in terms that everybody can understand and not in  
18 mysterious alphabet labels and labels that the media or  
19 Attorneys General make up.

20 The policies of prior administrations created a  
21 presumption against disclosure. Government workers were not  
22 rewarded for dealing with FOIA requests fairly and promptly,  
23 and there was little accountability at the higher levels of  
24 the bureaucracy for unsatisfactory performance.

25 I don't know whether this story is apocryphal, but

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1 I have heard it several times. A few years ago a newspaper  
2 reporter toured the FOIA processing shop at one Justice  
3 Department component and noted that there was a sign on the  
4 wall that said "when in doubt, cross it out." The sign is  
5 down now.

6 The results of this presumption of nondisclosure  
7 were predictably disastrous. One study showed that in 1992  
8 fully 50 percent of all American newspapers reported being  
9 wrongfully denied access to public information. The study  
10 found a pattern of officially sanctioned attempts to avoid  
11 openness laws. What's more, although one fifth of these  
12 newspapers challenged Government denials in court, many  
13 American newspapers couldn't find the money for a court  
14 fight, and so the information never reached the public and  
15 the Government's decision not to disclose was never reviewed  
16 by a judge.

17 Which reminds me that I hope we all join together  
18 with the legal profession and media to do what we can to  
19 make sure that our legal system and our court system are  
20 accessible not only to the media, but to the 70 percent of  
21 the poor and the working poor in America who, according to  
22 the American Bar Association, do not have access to the  
23 legal system.

24 (Applause.)

25 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: With this presumption

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1 against disclosure there has, at the same time, been huge  
2 increases in requests for information. Since 1984, FOIA  
3 requests have doubled. Across the Federal Government, FOIA  
4 requests now exceed 600,000 per year, costing the  
5 Government, as a whole, more than \$100 million to process.  
6 Each year alone the Justice Department receives 123,000 FOIA  
7 requests and spends \$29 million on processing them. During  
8 the last two administrations these great increases  
9 overwhelmed understaffed public information departments,  
10 creating enormous delays that frustrated the very purposes  
11 of the Freedom of Information Act.

12 This, then, was the situation the President faced  
13 on January 20th, 1993. By October 4th, 1993, the President  
14 issued a memorandum to all heads of departments and  
15 agencies. The President instructed his entire Government  
16 that the Freedom of Information Act is, and I quote, a vital  
17 part of the participatory system of Government. I am  
18 committed to enhancing its effectiveness in my  
19 administration.

20 In implementing the President's instruction I have  
21 taken the following steps. I rescinded the Departments 1981  
22 Guidelines for the Defense of Agency Actions in Freedom of  
23 Information Litigation. Under our new policy, the  
24 Department will no longer defend an Agency's withholding of  
25 information merely because there is a substantial legal

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1 basis for doing so. Instead, the Department will now apply  
2 a presumption of disclosure in all FOIA Act cases. If an  
3 Agency cannot overcome this presumption of disclosure, the  
4 Department of Justice will not defend a decision to withhold  
5 information.

6 Second, I instructed all Government Agencies and  
7 Departments that Freedom of Information Act exemptions  
8 should only be invoked in limited circumstances. Our new  
9 policy is that the Justice Department will not defend the  
10 assertion of Freedom of Information Act exemptions unless  
11 the Agency reasonably foresees that disclosure would be  
12 harmful to a Government or private interest protected by the  
13 exemption. No longer will we defend nondisclosure in cases  
14 where information only technically or arguably falls within  
15 an exemption.

16 Third, I urged all Government FOIA officers to  
17 make discretionary disclosures under the Act whenever  
18 possible, particularly when a governmental interest would  
19 be affected. In many instances these discretionary  
20 disclosures can satisfy the goals of the Act without  
21 undercutting an Agency's legitimate legal defenses.

22 Fourth, I instructed Justice Department lawyers  
23 to undertake a litigation review of cases pending at the  
24 time of the announcement of our policy statement. Already  
25 we have reversed two nondisclosure decisions in two pending

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1 cases and released the information to the public and the  
2 media.

3 Fifth, I began a complete review of all of all of  
4 the Department of Justice FOIA regulations, forms, and  
5 correspondence. You've been introduced today to two people  
6 I have a great respect for, Richard Huff and Dan Metcalf,  
7 the codirectors of our FOIA office. They have done a  
8 wonderful job in trying to address these concerns and to do  
9 everything possible to make Government open, consistent with  
10 privacy interests.

11 The goal of our review, a goal being implemented  
12 Government-wide by the Vice President's National Performance  
13 Review, is to remind everybody that FOIA requesters are our  
14 customers. They are users of a Government service,  
15 participants in an administrative process, and constituents  
16 in a democratic society. Our procedures, forms, and letters  
17 should treat FOIA requesters with the respect they deserve.

18 In connection with this effort, I will be calling  
19 on all the requester communities, the newsmedia, corporate  
20 America, historians and academicians, to make suggestions  
21 for streamlining the administrative side of the FOIA  
22 process. I have been gratified by the number of people who  
23 just today at this reception and luncheon have come to me  
24 saying we would really like to work with you, and I extend  
25 our pledge to do everything possible to work with you to

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1 identify administrative process and procedures that we can  
2 undertake to facilitate the elimination of the backlog and  
3 to be responsive.

4 Sixth, I initiated a Government-wide review of the  
5 huge backlog of FOIA requests. I hope to use the results  
6 of this review to help identify new resources and personnel  
7 to devote to the problem. After all, it does no good for  
8 an Agency to draft a great open Government policy at one  
9 end of the hall, while down at the other end sits a hapless  
10 Government employee buried under hundreds and thousands of  
11 requests. But as we have undertaken this review, I think  
12 we see what steps can be taken to eliminate some of the  
13 problems that have been road blocks on our way.

14 Seventh, I announced last week that we had  
15 established procedures to expedite FOIA requests in cases  
16 of extraordinary media interest. Under the new procedure,  
17 FOIA requests can be moved to the front of the line if the  
18 Director of Public Affairs determines that there is  
19 widespread and exceptional interest in the information and  
20 that that information concerns possible questions about the  
21 Government's integrity which affect public confidence.

22 Eighth, the Department of Justice initiated a new  
23 policy requiring the quick handling and appropriate public  
24 disclosure of investigations by our Office of Professional  
25 Responsibility. This includes inquiries into complaints of

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1 misconduct by Justice Department attorneys and  
2 investigators.

3 Ninth, I committed myself to holding regular  
4 weekly news availabilities. As many of you know, these  
5 sessions are open to all of the media. Any reporter with  
6 a credential is free to wander in, pull up a chair, and ask  
7 any question a Thursday morning. No subject is off limits,  
8 though there are certainly subjects that I cannot talk  
9 about. Your colleagues in Miami will tell you that I am  
10 famous for my: "No comment. That is a pending case." Nina  
11 Totenberg says that I am better capable of saying nothing  
12 in a nice way than anybody she has ever met.

13 (Laughter.)

14 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: But at least you have a  
15 chance to ask me, and ask me you do. I have never heard one  
16 question asked 10 different ways so often in all my life.  
17 But I want to be responsive in areas where we should be  
18 forthcoming. At the same time, we must always carefully  
19 balance the right to a fair trial, the responsibility for  
20 seeing that an investigation is conducted in the right way,  
21 that national security is appropriately protected. And yet  
22 we can and must and will balance that with freedom of the  
23 press. I take very seriously the fair balancing of these  
24 rights.

25 There have been a couple of times when I perhaps

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1 wished that my availability was not weekly, was not at all.  
2 Once somebody said you don't seem to enjoy being here. I  
3 said, "would you?"

4 (Laughter.)

5 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: There were a couple of  
6 times when I would just as soon not have had to go, but I  
7 did go because I think it's important to be as responsive  
8 as possible. And I would also like to say that despite your  
9 ability to ask the same question in so many different ways,  
10 I have appreciated the opportunity to get to know you and  
11 to be able to respond, and I appreciate the job that you do.  
12 Just wait until I get a headline that I don't like.

13 (Laughter.)

14 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I am proud that we run one  
15 of the most open and accessible major departments in  
16 Government.

17 Tenth, Carl Stern has undertaken, and I have  
18 backed him up, to respond quickly to the concerns of the  
19 media. One time not too long ago he met with a group of  
20 magazine publishers and distributors and we were able to  
21 follow up and respond to their concerns. I want to be able  
22 to do that. I want to be able to serve the people. I want  
23 Government to be open.

24 I hope our actions so far prove that the Clinton  
25 administration is doing more than giving lip service to the

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1 principle of open government. We are taking real concrete  
2 actions. Our goal is to create meaningful, lasting change.  
3 But I've been around newspaper people all my life; they  
4 raised me. So at the risk of being presumptuous, I think  
5 I know what you're saying; okay, Janet, nice policy, now how  
6 are you going to implement it when all we hear about is  
7 cutting Government, laying off people, downsizing staffs?  
8 When are these policies going to make a difference in my  
9 daily work as a reporter, an editor, or a publisher?

10 I want to tackle your concerns head-on. Our  
11 challenge is much like the one faced by a captain who must  
12 bring an aircraft carrier about, and I was so relieved at  
13 the reception before the luncheon to have somebody describe  
14 it that way. You touch the controls, you hear a lot of  
15 noise and grinding and gnashing of gears, but you do not see  
16 much movement.

17 We are prepared to stick it out until we get it  
18 turned around and we are truly responsive. We are  
19 constantly working on new ways to make the civil servants  
20 who administer the FOIA process understand how important it  
21 is. In the Department, for example, we intend to compile  
22 productivity statistics and other measures of  
23 accountability. All of this information will be distributed  
24 regularly to my assistant attorneys general. This is just  
25 one way we plan to focus on backlogs.

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1 I am determined to make my message heard. All  
2 employees will receive with their next paycheck a directive  
3 from me regarding FOIA reforms. The directive reviews the  
4 new FOIA openness policies and instructs every Justice  
5 Department employee to implement these policies. I have  
6 directed everyone in the Justice Department to make FOIA  
7 compliance a greater priority in the future.

8 As my directive concludes, and I quote: It is my  
9 goal, and the President's as well, that we will not waiver  
10 in our support for effective law enforcement. This new  
11 spirit of Government openness reaches all employees who are  
12 in any way involved in the administration of the Act, and  
13 we can do so while at the same time fulfilling all of our  
14 responsibilities.

15 Everyone understands that openness is a priority.  
16 In addition, I am trying to develop an automated system that  
17 categorizes the information as it comes in the door. There  
18 is no reason why we must do the categorization a year or two  
19 later in such a time-consuming way.

20 The fact is that any reporter who walks into the  
21 Department of Justice Public Affairs Office has a good  
22 chance of quickly getting a document, if it is readily  
23 available and not covered by an exemption. If you or one  
24 of your reporters is seeking a document that is clearly  
25 available for disclosure, we will try to provide it without

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1 delay.

2 I also believe it is fair to say our FOIA reforms  
3 are producing better disclosure decisions. Here is just one  
4 example of how our policy is working. Last September the  
5 17th the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled  
6 that the Justice Department properly withheld the great bulk  
7 of the 1987 report on Kurt Waldheim. This report led to the  
8 exclusion from the United States of Waldheim, then President  
9 of Austria and former Secretary General of the United  
10 Nations, because of his participation in Nazi war crimes.

11

12 The Justice Department, under the prior  
13 administration, won in court. Because the court upheld the  
14 Department's position that release of the report might make  
15 it easier for Waldheim to fashion an argument to get into  
16 the U.S. in the future, the Department was not required to  
17 make the report public, yet just this past weekend we  
18 released the report in its entirety.

19 Why? Because under our new policy making  
20 disclosure the norm and requiring a demonstrable rather than  
21 a speculative harm, the decision to withhold was revisited  
22 by the Department on its own initiative and the decision was  
23 reversed. Even though there was a substantial legal basis  
24 for withholding affirmed by the court of appeals, the new  
25 policy resulted in disclosure. The 204 page Waldheim report

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1 was delivered to the two FOIA requesters on last Saturday  
2 and was made available to anyone else who wanted it  
3 beginning the next day.

4 I want to speak just a bit more about the  
5 challenges that face us. First, there will be undoubtedly  
6 many cases where your goal of free and easy access will  
7 conflict with the Government's legitimate interests of  
8 national security, of appropriate law enforcement, and of  
9 the right to fair trial. When rights conflict, I only ask  
10 that we be able to sit down and talk it out at first without  
11 confrontation, and in a tone and fashion that respects the  
12 difficult job that we all have. I used to get into fuss  
13 with the Miami Herald lawyers at home, but most of the time  
14 we could sit down with the editors and the lawyers and work  
15 it out so that the constitutional rights of all concerned  
16 were satisfactorily protected.

17 Secondly, members of the press and public will  
18 undoubtedly continue to experience frustrating delays in  
19 receiving information until we get this backlog straightened  
20 out. I would ask that you help us in one specific regard.  
21 You can assist us by narrowing very broad FOIA requests so  
22 that we can process them more quickly.

23 For example, a journalist doing research on the  
24 Dalkon Shield litigation recently complained he had been  
25 waiting several years for a reply. We checked and found out

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1 his request was so broad that the FOIA processors had  
2 already gathered 87 packing cases of files to go through and  
3 would probably need another year or more to inspect the  
4 files page by page. Because of the intervention of our  
5 Public Affairs Office, the journalist worked with the FOIA  
6 people to narrow his request to a few specifics. He was  
7 told he would receive what he needs in 90 days.

8 We need to work together, and I extend to you my  
9 pledge that we can do so. These are extraordinary  
10 challenges. They will become more so with the vast increase  
11 in technology. There are doubtless many other potential  
12 technologies that are unforeseen today, but the Clinton  
13 administration looks forward to working with you in every  
14 way possible to continue, no matter what the technology, to  
15 make Government as open as possible.

16 I want to thank you again for the chance to be  
17 here. This has been an incredible year, the greatest  
18 opportunity that any lawyer in America could ever have to  
19 serve the American people. I have been so impressed with  
20 so many different people, the media, public servants,  
21 citizens that I have met across this nation, children  
22 overcoming tremendous adversities. It has been an  
23 extraordinary honor to serve.

24 As some of you may know, I have more than a  
25 passing familiarity with your business. As I told you

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1 before, my grandfather was the chief photographer for the  
2 Herald, my aunt was the music critic, my brother's a  
3 columnist for Newsday, and my mother was an investigative  
4 reporter for the Miami News.

5 My father, Henry Reno, came to the United States  
6 from Denmark when he was 12-years-old, speaking not one word  
7 of English. 4 years later he was the editor of the high  
8 school newspaper, and in 1923, after 2 years of animal  
9 husbandry, as my grandfather became the chief photographer  
10 for the Herald he told somebody at the Herald that they  
11 should hire his son because he wrote well. For 43 years  
12 after that he was a police reporter for the Miami Herald.

13 Henry Reno was a very fair, very gentle, very kind  
14 man. Even in my years as State Attorney in Dade County, I  
15 would have judges and police officers come to me. They had  
16 worked with him. They would come up and say your father was  
17 the only reporter that I could trust to get it accurate and  
18 trust never to reveal a confidence. He was never mean. He  
19 always looked at people with respect, he always tried to  
20 find the best in people, but it didn't keep him from  
21 reporting as vigorously as possible.

22 I still remember to this day the pride I felt when  
23 John Knight was quoted as saying that -- when the Herald won  
24 the Pulitzer Prize in the forties for reporting on wide-open  
25 gambling in Dade County -- there were two people

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1 responsible; one of them was Henry Reno.

2           The lessons my father taught me will remain with  
3 me always. He showed me how to be open and fair and honest.  
4 He taught me the vital importance of a free and vigorous  
5 press, a press that could expose government inaction and  
6 corruption, that could expose police abuse, but could also  
7 support what was good in the community. My father's example  
8 guides me each and every day as I try to do the job of  
9 Attorney General of the United States.

10           I hope that on the day I walk out of the door as  
11 Attorney General for the last time, you'll not still be  
12 reporting on whether I wrestle alligators --

13           (Laughter.)

14           ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: -- What my popularity  
15 index is, or whether I'm blustery and wave my hands too  
16 much. I hope, with all my heart, that you'll be able to  
17 report that I did a good job for the American people. I'm  
18 going to try my level best to do that. I hope that you will  
19 be able to report that I will have left the Department as  
20 open as possible, and that my relationship with the media  
21 will have been one of openness and mutual regard and  
22 respect. I want to try to do the very best I can to live  
23 up to what Henry Reno would expect.

24           (Applause.)

25           MODERATOR: Thank you, very much, Ms. Reno. We

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1 certainly appreciate that and we have an awful lot of  
2 questions, as you can imagine, so why don't we get the  
3 hardest ones out first. How can the Clinton administration  
4 say it's determined to keep information open and available  
5 after the way the White House for months stonewalled  
6 Whitewater?

7           ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think one of the most  
8 difficult issues that we face is the whole question of  
9 balancing privacy interest with the public's right to know.  
10 As I have said previously, I come from a State that has  
11 sunshine law. Everything is public record. All of your  
12 life history is public record, your personnel files are  
13 public record. And so I come with a different understanding  
14 than I think many people that come to Washington.

15           And I think working through those issues of, hey,  
16 that's a private matter versus what the public has a right  
17 to know is a difficult issue, and I think the President has  
18 indicated that he wants to do everything he can to make sure  
19 that we comply, that the information is provided in  
20 Whitewater, and that we do everything we can to open up  
21 Government, consistent with the FOIA Act and consistent with  
22 privacy.

23           MODERATOR: Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary has  
24 endorsed a new openness policy which will declassify much,  
25 perhaps most, of the nuclear information on radiation

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1 testing and plutonium stocks, yet the Department of Justice  
2 litigates each release. How will DOJ support O'Leary's  
3 initiative, or will it continue to resist?

4 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: These are the issues that  
5 we face in working with the Office of Freedom of Information  
6 and the Department of Energy. We want to address those  
7 issues pursuant to the policy -- the new policy that I have  
8 outlined.

9 MODERATOR: There are a number of questions that  
10 talk about in the past people have gone through and gotten  
11 Freedom of Information Requests, and they get back blacked  
12 out pages. This person says my parents and sister were  
13 victims of a criminal assault 21 years ago. The FBI was  
14 called in to help for a short time. 2 years ago a request  
15 for the FBI files yielded much information that was blacked  
16 out. Would that be true today?

17 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: It depends on what the  
18 information. Obviously, if it relates to intelligence  
19 information that's part of an ongoing investigation it may  
20 continue to be blacked out. If it's information that is  
21 covered clearly and if the information is such that it  
22 overcomes the presumption of disclosure, then it would  
23 continue to be blacked out. But that is a very narrow  
24 question that I can't answer other than to describe the  
25 generalities with which we would approach it.

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1           MODERATOR: One questioner asks will there be any  
2 penalties for a bureaucrat who deliberately slows down an  
3 information request?

4           ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I have a special mission  
5 this year. When I came to Washington a little over a year  
6 ago people talked about employees in the Department of  
7 Justice. I have been so incredibly impressed with the  
8 dedicated men and women who work in every component of the  
9 Department, in Main Justice, in the law enforcement  
10 agencies, including DEA, the FBI, and United States  
11 Attorneys' offices. And I am dedicated to doing everything  
12 I can to let the American people know how fortunate they are  
13 to have such extraordinary men and women working for them  
14 and with them.

15           I haven't seen anybody within my direct purview  
16 do anything that would slow things down. Obviously with  
17 respect to any allegation of misconduct, we would review  
18 it, but that presumes something that I don't think will  
19 happen.

20           MODERATOR: This questioner says you mentioned  
21 that FOIA requests cost the Federal Government tens of  
22 millions of dollars to process, but you failed to mention  
23 that the requester in nearly all cases must pay the  
24 Government for its processing costs. You didn't mean to  
25 omit that fact, did you?

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1 (Laughter.)

2 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Again, in terms of the  
3 cost and in terms of what's involved, it is a very expensive  
4 process. I think we can make it less expensive, and I think  
5 one of our duties is to try to do everything we can to  
6 reduce expense, to streamline the process, so that the  
7 American people can get information without having to pay  
8 for it.

9 MODERATOR: Getting on to some other topics of  
10 interest, last time you were here -- and I know I personally  
11 wrote stories about your detailed plan for combatting  
12 violence in the United States. It was a well-reasoned plan  
13 that looked at the whole person, going back to their  
14 prenatal conditions, on trying to stop violent behavior  
15 early on. But when the President made his State of the  
16 Union message, he came up with a three strikes and you're  
17 out policy that a lot of people in the criminal justice  
18 business say will just fill up the jails and not solve the  
19 problem. What happened in the middle there?

20 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Good.

21 (Laughter.)

22 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I have now gotten an  
23 open-ended invitation to use my next 12 minutes.

24 (Laughter.)

25 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: But I will summarize.

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1           What we have done is just what I said we were  
2 going to do. If you listen closely to that speech, it  
3 addresses just what we were talking about. In terms of law  
4 enforcement, we have brought law enforcement agencies  
5 together and according to career people in the Department  
6 of Justice, they have never seen them work so closely  
7 together, nor with State and local authorities, in our  
8 antiviolence initiative and in efforts to focus on what the  
9 Federal Government can properly do, what its proper role is,  
10 what it can do in exchanging information with local law  
11 enforcement. And we're making significant efforts around  
12 the country.

13           The crime bill proposes not just a narrow three  
14 strikes, you're out from the administration's point of view.  
15 And I told you then and I'll tell you now -- I think what  
16 I told you that afternoon back then was I think we should  
17 identify the bad guys, prosecute them, put them away, and  
18 keep them away, and that's what three strikes, you're out  
19 does.

20           At the same time, I think it is important that we  
21 focus on who else is in our prisons. We have got people who  
22 are not three strikers, they're one strikers, and they  
23 deserve to serve a lot longer sentence. And one of the  
24 administration's proposals in connection with the crime bill  
25 is to direct monies to States so that they can use them to

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1 house violent offenders for the length of time the judges  
2 are sentencing them.

3 But it also recognizes that there are a lot of  
4 people who are coming out sooner rather than later, that a  
5 substantial number of them have a substance abuse problem,  
6 and that it makes no sense whatsoever to prosecute them, put  
7 them away, and then let them come out without drug  
8 treatment, after-care, or follow-up. The crime bill  
9 contains provisions for proposals for drug courts such as  
10 those we had in Dade County.

11 I talked to you about youth violence being one of  
12 the great crime problems in America today. Too many kids  
13 put a gun up besides somebody's head and think they can get  
14 away with it. We need boot camps and other youthful  
15 offender facilities that can let kids know that there is a  
16 fair, firm sanction for this violence. But at the same time  
17 it makes no sense to let them out of prison, or out of the  
18 boot camp, or out of the youthful offender facility without  
19 after-care and follow-up. The crime bill proposed by the  
20 President argues for just that.

21 There are prevention programs. An ounce of  
22 prevention. I think there will be a jobs initiative. And  
23 then look at what the President has done. The first bill  
24 passed went to family leave, reinforcing the family. Donna  
25 Shalala has just announced the implementation of further

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1 family preservation programs to bring the family together.

2 Health care reform goes to the very heart of what  
3 we are talking about in terms of prevention, of giving the  
4 children of America a chance to grow in a safe, healthy way.  
5 It makes no sense for a child of a working poor person not  
6 to have preventative medical care because their parent makes  
7 too little -- makes too much to be eligible for Medicaid,  
8 and not enough to be -- and doesn't have insurance benefits.  
9 We can make sense of that.

10 What Secretary Riley has done in the Department  
11 of Education in terms of the Safe Schools Initiative and  
12 Goals 2000 builds block by block on what we're talking  
13 about. Secretary Shalala is talking about moving Head Start  
14 into 0 to 3 as well, for those children who do not have safe  
15 constructive educare. The School to Work program is a  
16 symbol, again, of the building blocks we need to give our  
17 children a chance to graduate from high school with the  
18 skills that can enable them to earn a living wage. And the  
19 National Service Corps, which we will begin to see develop  
20 this summer through public safety efforts and the like as  
21 a summer of safety, are all examples.

22 It's there, it's happening, and it's so exciting  
23 to see communities responding throughout America as they,  
24 understanding their needs and resources, develop  
25 partnerships with the Federal Government.

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1 Thank you.

2 (Laughter.)

3 (Applause.)

4 MODERATOR: Well, you just got a twofer there.  
5 You got two speeches for the price of one.

6 (Laughter.)

7 MODERATOR: We will be collecting another \$25 at  
8 the door.

9 If one of your Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and  
10 Firearms branch heads reported to you that he had discovered  
11 a religious cult violating firearms laws, how would you tell  
12 him to handle it?

13 (Laughter.)

14 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: First of all, the Bureau  
15 is -- Secretary Bentsen would not want the Bureau of  
16 Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms to be referred to as mine,  
17 so --

18 (Laughter.)

19 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We have a wonderful  
20 working relationship with the Treasury enforcement agencies  
21 and the Bureau, and we're very proud to work with them and  
22 with Assistant Secretary Ron Noble in this effort.

23 In, I think, 3 weeks, I will be going down to  
24 Quantico to participate in a program that highlights what  
25 is needed to address the issues raised in the reports

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1 following Waco. I don't know yet the content of it.  
2 Director Freeh has gone through the program, he says it is  
3 excellent, and we will be addressing those issues, doing,  
4 as I said at the time, whatever we can do to learn from the  
5 tragedy of Waco and to be able to apply whatever possibly  
6 can be learned to avoiding such tragedies in the future.  
7 One of the tragedies is that we will never know what was the  
8 right thing to do.

9 MODERATOR: You said once that all pending  
10 television violence bills are constitutional. Do you still  
11 think so?

12 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I don't know what's  
13 pending now.

14 (Laughter.)

15 (Applause.)

16 MODERATOR: Oh, hum, well that was a short one.

17 (Laughter.)

18 MODERATOR: Let's take a look here. You ruined  
19 my system here.

20 (Laughter.)

21 MODERATOR: I'll try a hard one here.

22 The Israeli Government outlawed two U.S.  
23 originated or organized groups, Kack, K-a-c-k, and Kahane  
24 Chai, who -- I'm sorry -- who migrated to Israel from  
25 Brooklyn in New York. These groups hold Israeli

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1 citizenship. Is the Justice Department planning to outlaw  
2 these two groups?

3 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I would not comment on  
4 that at this time.

5 MODERATOR: Okay. Now you're really ruining my  
6 system.

7 (Laughter.)

8 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Only one no comment so  
9 far.

10 MODERATOR: I know, I know. It's just I'm used  
11 to having a little more time.

12 Okay, what safeguards are you implementing to  
13 ensure that your open-policy program is not derailed by a  
14 future more closed administration?

15 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Get the President elected  
16 again.

17 (Laughter.)

18 (Applause.)

19 MODERATOR: He can't last forever.

20 (Laughter.)

21 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Get the Vice President  
22 elected.

23 (Laughter.)

24 MODERATOR: Okay, okay. Can the Justice  
25 Department do anything to stop the huge shipments of Chinese

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1 guns into the United States?

2 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I have heard reference to  
3 this issue and I want to address this. One of the first --  
4 and I visited this issue about 3 weeks ago and don't have  
5 a report back on it. And one of the things after somebody  
6 earlier asked me that question is a note in my purse to go  
7 back and check on where we're at in that effort.

8 MODERATOR: Okay. Before asking the last question  
9 I would like to present you with, of course, a certificate  
10 of appreciation for appearing here and a Press Club mug,  
11 which means you now have two, and so you can have a friend  
12 in for coffee.

13 (Laughter.)

14 MODERATOR: Last question is do you think the name  
15 J. Edgar Hoover will ever come off the FBI Building?

16 (Laughter.)

17 (Applause.)

18 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: That's the \$64,000  
19 question.

20 (Applause.)

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