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1 ADDRESS BY ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO
2 TO
3 DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA BAR WINTER CONVENTION
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7 Wednesday, March 6, 1996
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11 Washington Convention Center
12 Exhibit Hall A
13 900 9th Street
14 Washington, D.C.
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1 P R O C E E D I N G S
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(1:00 p.m.)

3 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you very,
4 very much. It is a very special privilege for me
5 to be here with you today because so many of you
6 in your bar have made me feel so welcome and have
7 been such strong support the three years I have
8 been Attorney General and I am deeply grateful to
9 you.

10 One of the people who has been the
11 strongest support is Jack Keeney
12 and I am so proud to be here today to see you
13 honored. I know of no lawyer more deserving.

14 Even when I was in Dade County, I heard the words
15 Jack Keeney, and that's certainly been true
16 through the years.

17 One month ago I announced to the House
18 of Delegates the President's new executive order
19 on civil justice reform. One of the centerpieces
20 of that order is the requirement that all Federal
21 agencies develop appropriate programs to
22 encourage and facilitate pro bono legal and other
23 volunteer services by government employees,
24 including attorneys, to be performed on their own
25 time as permitted by law.

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1 This is a wonderful city. I've had the
2 opportunity to walk it and explore it and to know
3 its history and its beauty. But I've also had
4 the chance to see the terrible plight of many
5 public and private institutions in the District
6 of Columbia. Government funded providers as well as
7 private service providers are facing financial
8 crises. Our poorest citizens and especially
9 their children are bearing the brunt of this very
10 difficult time.

11 Even in the past when financial times
12 were better, the combined efforts of legal
13 service providers, law school clinics, and pro
14 bono attorneys have met less than 20 percent of
15 the legal needs of the District's poor. We are
16 now facing an even greater challenge.

17 I applaud the leadership and the vision
18 of the four chief judges of the Federal and
19 District of Columbia courts who convened a
20 meeting of the largest law firms in the city to
21 discuss the crisis in legal services. This bar
22 association has been exemplary in developing new
23 strategies to expand pro bono resources. I know
24 that many firms have answered this call--all in
25 the highest tradition of our profession and I

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1 have watched some of you directly in action with
2 great admiration.

3 Being a lawyer is not merely a
4 vocation. It is a public trust and each of us
5 has an obligation to give back to our
6 communities. And indeed, lawyers have so very,
7 very much to contribute. In this noblest spirit
8 of our profession, in response to the President's
9 mandate, and in order to join with the private
10 bar here which is so generously responding to the
11 call for more pro bono resources for the District
12 of Columbia, I am very pleased to announce today
13 the Department of Justice's pro bono policy.

14 We will encourage and support efforts
15 by department employees to provide pro bono legal
16 and volunteer services within their communities
17 that are consistent with applicable Federal
18 statutes and regulations governing conflict of
19 interest and outside activities. While service
20 in the Department of Justice is itself one of the
21 highest forms of public service, the Department
22 further strides to increase access to justice for
23 all and to strengthen our communities.

24 And I would like to pay special
25 recognition to the lawyers of the Department of

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1 Justice with whom I've had a chance to work. I
2 have a special mission while I am Attorney
3 General and when I leave this office and that is
4 to let this nation and its people know how many
5 dedicated men and women work with them and for
6 them in the Department throughout this country.

7 We are encouraging all Department
8 employees based on the ABA model rules of
9 professional responsibility to set a personal
10 voluntary goal of at least 50 hours per year of
11 pro bono legal and volunteer service. This
12 policy extends to all Department employees and
13 encourages all kinds of volunteer work, legal and
14 nonlegal.

15 We have already begun to explore with
16 the D.C. Bar ways in which Justice Department
17 employees can add our efforts to addressing the
18 unmet legal needs in the District. We will

19 establish a pro bono and volunteer services
20 committee within the Department chaired by a high
21 level official from the Office of Policy
22 Development with representatives from all offices
23 and components.

24 This committee will develop pro bono
25 opportunities to complement our existing

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1 volunteer services program and make them known to
2 all our lawyer and nonlawyer employees. Our
3 policy of encouraging pro bono and volunteer work
4 extends to all the United States attorney's
5 offices across the country.

6 As part as our efforts to provide
7 assistance to the District of Columbia, we are
8 developing a special program with the Office of
9 Corporation Counsel. Deputy Attorney General
10 Jamie Gorelick and Corporation Counsel Chuck Ruff
11 are both here to describe that program to you.
12 The Justice Department is very pleased to join
13 you in pro bono service.

14 I thank you all for the great work that
15 the D.C. Bar and its members are doing and I
16 would now like to introduce you to one of your
17 own, a person who has become my great friend and
18 a splendid deputy, Deputy Attorney General Jamie
19 Gorelick.
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Remarks for the Deputy Attorney General
D.C. Bar Luncheon
Announcement of Assistance to
Corporation Counsel
Wednesday, March 6, 1996 12:30 p.m.

Thank you. It is always an honor to rejoin the D.C. Bar for occasions like this one.

The Attorney General means every word of her endorsement of community service. She demonstrates her commitment by devoting several hours a month of her own very precious time: she has adopted a public elementary school in the District and schedules regular visits with the students there. She reads to the children, and has taught them science and history classes. During her most recent visit, she conducted a class on the importance of black history month. Her service is a model for all of us to follow. As Newt Gingrich stated last year:

"Real leadership starts by setting the agenda and by being a symbol of what matters. For example, Attorney General Reno going to visit the schools is a very good thing to do. It's symbolically powerful."

Thanks to the Attorney General's example, we have broad bipartisan support for our pro bono efforts.

As part of the Department's contribution to the District, I am pleased to announce a plan to provide assistance to the District of Columbia Office of Corporation Counsel. Corporation Counsel Chuck Ruff is performing a marvelous service to the District of Columbia by making the most of his many connections to private law firms and federal officials to bring new resources and support to Corporation Counsel.

Chuck approached me several months ago with a plea for assistance. After hearing about the inadequate resources and tremendous infrastructure needs of his office, I agreed to explore ways in which the Department could share its resources and expertise to assist Corporation Counsel, consistent with our ethical guidelines and resource limitations. We have identified several means of assistance that I believe will go a long way toward improving Corporation Counsel's ability to provide quality legal services to the District.

First, we will help improve Corporation Counsel's office infrastructure. The Department is sending technical experts to review Corporation Counsel's computer systems and provide guidance on the costs and feasibility of installing appropriate software, electronic and voice mail systems, and network servers

for personal computers. We are prepared to share the Department's case management systems and related software to enable Corporation Counsel to record and track caseload information more effectively. We are also providing twenty surplus standalone personal computers and a dozen laptop computers to the office. These resources will make all Corporation Counsel attorneys more efficient, and the improvements in the office's computer and communications networks will be particularly valuable management tools.

Second, the Department will help improve training for Corporation Counsel attorneys. Our training experts will help design basic and advanced level training courses for Corporation Counsel attorneys. In addition, Corporation Counsel attorneys will be able to enroll in Justice Department training classes and share our extensive training videotape collection.

Third, we will encourage Justice Department attorneys to provide time and expertise to Corporation Counsel. In an effort similar to the pro bono program that Mr. Ruff has developed with the law firms -- which he explained to some of you in yesterday's presentation -- we will encourage Justice Department attorneys to take certain cases on a pro bono basis for Corporation Counsel. We will also recruit a small number of attorneys who are interested in gaining litigation experience to take on individual civil litigation matters for the Office, which has a far greater caseload than it can handle. Finally, we can offer guidance in particular cases or areas of need where Justice Department's expertise is strong.

These steps will build a partnership between the Justice Department and the Office of Corporation Counsel that will be tremendously beneficial to both partners and to the city. Corporation Counsel will receive badly needed assistance in critical areas, and the federal government will benefit from having a Corporation Counsel that functions well and supports the legal needs of the D.C. government and its citizens. I applaud Chuck for taking the initiative to ask the Department for this assistance and look forward to working with him in establishing this unique partnership.

I now want to introduce a person with a long and distinguished career of service to the D. C. government and to this Bar: Corporation Counsel Charles Ruff.

NOTE: The Deputy Attorney General may have departed from the prepared text. However, she stands by the text as

printed.