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ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO

7

ADDRESS TO FIRST NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

8

ON VICTIMS OF FEDERAL CRIME

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Monday, February 10, 1997

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Omni Shoreham Hotel

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2500 Calvert Street, N.W.

20 Washington, D.C.

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

2 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you,  
3 Kathryn. But I am the one to thank you and  
4 your colleagues across the country. You do so  
5 much for so many, and make such a great  
6 difference for us all.

7 This is a particularly poignant  
8 moment for me to be addressing you, because I  
9 arrived a little bit late, having come from the  
10 funeral of Master Patrol Officer Brian Gibson,  
11 who was shot as he waited at a light in his  
12 patrol car this past week.

13 I was reminded in the church, and  
14 afterwards in the most poignant terms possible,  
15 how important your work is to help people begin  
16 to understand, to help them come together, to  
17 help them begin to heal. And that's the reason  
18 this conference is so important.

19                   It's truly a pioneering conference.  
20       I'd like to thank the people who have made it  
21       possible.  Marlene, thank you not only for this  
22       conference, but for all you do for us, to help

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1       us to know the way to really reach out to  
2       victims and to make a difference.

3                   And to John Stein and the staff of  
4       the National Organization for Victim  
5       Assistance, thank you for your hard work in  
6       creating a week filled with the voices of  
7       experts, leaders in their field.  But, also,  
8       and more importantly, the voices of victims who  
9       remind us why we work so hard at what we do.

10                  I thank Eileen Adams and her  
11       wonderful staff at the Office for Victims of  
12       Crime for their vision in convening this  
13       symposium for victim witness coordinators in  
14       the Federal system.

15                  I'd like to talk to you about the  
16       themes that you will hear echoed over the days  
17       of this symposium, and touch upon a few that

18       are very close to my heart: What we and the  
19       justice system do for victims, how we do it,  
20       and how we can do our work even better than we  
21       are.

22                   Many who think about justice think

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1       only of the dramatic events of the criminal  
2       justice system: The siren of the police car  
3       that passes, or a police officer making an  
4       arrest, or the conviction of someone in court.

5                   But justice has a far broader meaning  
6       for us all. It encompasses healing. Everyone  
7       here represents both aspects of justice. You  
8       are healers and you are the center of the  
9       criminal justice system. You humanize for many  
10      victims the terribly confusing, and the very  
11      difficult process of seeking justice.

12                  And you are the critical link to  
13      victims' services without which many victims  
14      would have no opportunity to heal whatsoever.  
15      As you will learn over the next five days,  
16      federal laws and the Attorney General's

17 guidelines for victim and witness assistance  
18 hold all of federal law enforcement, each  
19 federal victim witness coordinator, and federal  
20 prosecutors to a very high standard in our  
21 treatment of victims.

22 But beyond the requirements set forth

5  
1 in the law, beyond the guidelines, I look to  
2 something more important. The standard I use  
3 is a personal one, and based on deep conviction  
4 that each victim of crime deserves to be  
5 treated with the utmost respect and the utmost  
6 dignity.

7 I put it this way, let us treat every  
8 victim of crime as we would want our child, our  
9 mother, or even ourselves to be treated. When  
10 it is a particularly frustrating time, and they  
11 are not understanding, just imagine what it  
12 would be like if your mother sat in that chair  
13 and didn't understand what was going on.

14 When the processes seem so long and  
15 involved and complicated, remember what it

16 would be like for your child at age four to be  
17 sitting there waiting to be deposed, and do  
18 everything you can to reach out and make what  
19 we do personal and human in every respect.

20 Work hard to understand what it is  
21 like to be a victim, and see the criminal  
22 justice system through their eyes.

6

1 I understand that tomorrow morning  
2 you will hear from a panel of remarkable  
3 victims, victims who have courage: A woman  
4 whose husband was murdered in the Oklahoma City  
5 bombing, a bank teller who was the victim of  
6 numerous bank robberies, and a minister whose  
7 church and congregation were the victims of  
8 racially motivated arson.

9 Listen to these victims, and to all  
10 victims with an eye toward how you can be even  
11 more responsive to their concerns. In the 15  
12 years I was a prosecutor in Dade County, I  
13 learned so much from all those who walked  
14 through my door.

15                   I learned to ask them questions, and  
16       to find out how I could have done a better job,  
17       even after the fact. Don't be afraid to ask  
18       questions, both at this symposium and in your  
19       work with victims for the years to come.

20                   I believe that all of us share the  
21       same goal in our work within the criminal  
22       justice system. We want to create a seamless

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1       web of services to help victims heal from the  
2       very moment the crime is committed throughout  
3       the criminal justice process and beyond.

4                   That police officer who responds, the  
5       first responder can so often be the magic that  
6       makes the difference in the person's ability to  
7       cope with the trauma of the crime and to deal  
8       with all that comes after.

9                   Key strands of that web must include  
10       access to immediate trauma and emergency  
11       response, short- and long-term psychological  
12       counselling, and shelter as well as advocacy  
13       throughout the criminal, tribal, military and

14 juvenile justice systems.

15 Don't discount that short-term  
16 counselling. I have been told again and again  
17 by so many that that short-term support, that  
18 short-term help made all the difference.

19 Crime victims should be safe  
20 throughout the process and should have access  
21 to diverse sources of financial recovery,  
22 including emergency financial assistance, crime

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1 victim compensation, restitution and civil  
2 legal remedies.

3 In addition to the victims  
4 themselves, we must recognize that each person,  
5 each victim, has a parent, a child, a community  
6 that shares in the victimization. We must  
7 learn to help all of them heal.

8 Our own Department of Justice is  
9 working to study and develop community justice  
10 models that will integrate the victim,  
11 sometimes the offender, and the community in  
12 our response to crime and in our effort to heal

13       the harm that affects us all when violent crime  
14       strikes.

15               As with so many other important work,  
16       and so much other important work in this field,  
17       victims themselves are helping to lead the way.

18               When I was in San Diego two weeks  
19       ago, speaking at the Indian Nation's  
20       Conference, I had the special privilege of  
21       meeting two very extraordinary individuals,  
22       Azeem Kamezia (phonetic) and Place Felix

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1       (phonetic).

2               These men have turned a devastating  
3       personal tragedy into a positive force for  
4       change in their community. Both are victims in  
5       a way of a gang-slashing, but each was on the  
6       opposite side of the gun.

7               Azeem's son was murdered while  
8       delivering pizzas by Place's 14-year-old  
9       grandson, a gang member. The grandson was  
10       convicted, and he was sentenced to 25 years to  
11       life.

12                   In a truly rare event, the caretakers  
13       of a murder victim and the offender recognize  
14       that their whole community was victimized by  
15       the violence that had shattered their lives.

16                   They founded the Teric Kamezia  
17       Foundation, dedicated to preventing similar  
18       crimes through educational programs in the  
19       schools. In these victim-impact forums,  
20       students interact with Mr. Kamezia and Mr.  
21       Felix and ex-gang members who can talk frankly  
22       about the choices they made, and their

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1       experiences in jail.

2                   These panels have made a lasting  
3       impact on the lives of children who have seen  
4       them, and have helped provide guidance to  
5       youths on how to avoid the violence that  
6       surrounds them so tragically every day.

7                   One elementary school student wrote,  
8       after listening to Azeem and Place, "When you  
9       guys came to our school, it made me think a  
10      lot, like about peer pressure. Some of my

11 friends try to pressure me into doing things I  
12 don't want to do.

13 "Now I'm going to make sure I know  
14 who I can turn to for help. I'm going to make  
15 the right choices for my future. I will not  
16 try to use violence for anything."

17 But one session will not be enough.  
18 We must all participate in helping a community  
19 heal from the violence that riddles it too  
20 often. Prevention programs such as  
21 school-based victim-impact classes and after  
22 school programs that give kids something to say

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1 yes to, are a critical part of the Justice  
2 Department's program to assist communities to  
3 overcome the violence that victimizes us all.

4 You know from your experiences that  
5 many victims tell us that, if they could have  
6 one wish it would have been to have prevented  
7 the crime in the first place. That is why we  
8 have so strongly supported the use of federal  
9 funds for prevention programs.

10                   What many parents who have lost their  
11       children to gang violence recognize is that for  
12       the safety, the health and the education of  
13       each child we must be concerned about the  
14       safety, health and education of all children.

15                   Across America and many different  
16       communities, parents like Azeem who have lost  
17       their kids to gang violence are devoting their  
18       lives to helping other children. They deserve  
19       our highest respect and support.

20                   Just a little over an hour ago I  
21       heard the Chief of Police of the District of  
22       Columbia talk about what Brian Gibson had meant

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1       to that force, what a splendid police officer  
2       he was, and how important it was that we reach  
3       out to his family and help them begin to heal.

4                   But he also brought that church to a  
5       real emotional feeling when he said, "but we  
6       have got to make sure that we look to the  
7       future, and now reach out and establish youth  
8       centers in every sector of this community so

9       that we can give our children a strong and  
10       positive future, and keep them from being the  
11       ones five and ten years from now who will pull  
12       the trigger again."

13               In addition to these remarkable  
14       individuals who have worked so hard, we see all  
15       around us communities working in partnerships  
16       to help heal the wounds of crime.

17               A good example is the wonderful work  
18       being done by the National Council of Black  
19       Churches to respond to the wave of hate and  
20       bias crimes that we have seen in our country,  
21       from the plague of African-American church  
22       burnings to the sobering figures on reported

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1       incidents of hate crime throughout our  
2       nation -- close to 8,000 in 1995 alone.

3               We have developed a curriculum to  
4       reach our young people, a guide for teachers to  
5       engage school-aged children in important  
6       discussions about tolerance, tolerance for each  
7       of the unique, and valuable pieces of the quilt

8 of races, sexual orientations and cultures that  
9 make up this wonderful nation.

10 Our own Office for Victims of Crime  
11 is working to train law enforcement agencies to  
12 identify and respond effectively to victims of  
13 hate and bias crimes. Together we can make a  
14 difference. Haters are cowards. They  
15 oftentimes back down when confronted.

16 We must come together and speak out  
17 against that which sometimes attempts to divide  
18 us. We have also seen other wonderful examples  
19 of community partnerships working to curb gang  
20 violence. One is Teens On Target in Los  
21 Angeles and Oakland, California.

22 Public and private agencies are

14  
1 working together to organize gunshot survivors,  
2 victims of gang violence to promote public  
3 awareness and violence prevention.

4 These teenage victims, many of whom  
5 are in wheelchairs, speak to thousands of  
6 school children every year, encouraging them

7 not to seek revenge, but rather to find  
8 nonviolent alternatives to conflict.

9 They also intervene with hospitalized  
10 gang members, urging them not to retaliate.  
11 Every action such as these young people follow  
12 can make a difference. Each of us can make a  
13 difference if we reach out to victims and help  
14 them begin to heal and help the community heal  
15 as well.

16 It has been a great privilege for me  
17 to work on victim issues. But it is a labor of  
18 love. We are all part of an exciting time.  
19 And we have seen some important accomplishments  
20 that benefit crime victims in many significant  
21 ways. Many, I am proud to say, have come  
22 during the last four years.

15

1 The core of the criminal justice  
2 system, the laws that regulate it, have  
3 provided new rights for victims of crime.  
4 President Clinton has been at the forefront of  
5 this work. He has been consistent and

6 absolutely unwavering in his efforts to fight  
7 violent crime and to focus on the needs of  
8 victims.

9 From the time I first met with him,  
10 which would have been four years ago yesterday  
11 in the oval office, when he talked to me about  
12 whether I should be Attorney General, he spoke  
13 then about victims and what work we had done in  
14 Dade County.

15 He spoke of his commitment to  
16 ensuring victim's rights, and he asked me what  
17 we could do to do it better. From the Crime  
18 Bill to the Brady Bill to the Antiterrorism  
19 Bill, he has constantly strived to make sure  
20 that the voices of victims are heard in real  
21 and solid legislation.

22 With the strong support of the

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1 Administration, and the power voices of crime  
2 victims such as Jim and Sarah Brady, the Brady  
3 Bill was passed requiring a waiting period for  
4 the purchase of handguns.

5                   In the first year of its existence,  
6       the Brady Bill helped to deter more than 60,000  
7       convicted felons from having a handgun.

8                   The President also strongly supported  
9       passage of the Loutenberg Amendment, which for  
10      the first time took guns out of the hands of  
11      people convicted of domestic violence  
12      misdemeanors.

13                  Countless survivors of domestic  
14      violence created coalitions across the nation  
15      and worked with the Administration to secure  
16      passage of the landmark Violence Against Women  
17      Act.

18                  Part of the 1994 Crime Act, VAWA,  
19      authorized \$1.6 billion to support a national  
20      domestic violence hot line, police prosecution  
21      and victim services initiatives at the local  
22      level, and important research in this vital and

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1      critical area.

2                  The 1994 Crime Act also expands the  
3      rights of and protections for victims in our

4 criminal justice system by providing sexual  
5 assault victims with counselling and payment  
6 for testing for sexually transmitted diseases,  
7 including HIV, by requiring interstate  
8 enforcement of protection orders and, through  
9 the Jacob Weaterling Act, by encouraging state  
10 establishment of sex offender registers.

11 The Voice of Megan Conca, a  
12 7-year-old victim who was sexually assaulted  
13 and murdered in 1994 by a twice-convicted sex  
14 offender, and the voice of a staunch victim  
15 advocate from Texas, Pam Lynchner, who perished  
16 in the TWA flight 800 disaster, are  
17 memorialized in 1996 Amendments to the sex  
18 offender registry law.

19 Megan's law, which bears the name of  
20 one child but was passed to protect every child  
21 in this country, encourages states to notify  
22 communities when convicted sexual offenders are

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1 released into their midst.

2 Under the Pam Lynchner Act, I will be

3        establishing, through the FBI, a nationwide  
4        database to track registered sex offenders  
5        wherever they may move in our country. And in  
6        states that do not have sufficient registration  
7        systems, the FBI will be responsible for sexual  
8        offender registration and community  
9        notification.

10                    In 1996 we also obtained passage of  
11        the Antiterrorism Act which provided \$1 million  
12        in funding to strengthen antiterrorism efforts,  
13        made restitution mandatory in violent crime  
14        cases, and expanded the compensation and  
15        assistance services for victims of terrorism,  
16        both home and abroad, including victims in the  
17        military.

18                    As a result of this act, the Office  
19        for Victims of Crime has been able to provide  
20        substantial assistance to the victims of the  
21        tragic bombing on Oklahoma City, providing  
22        funds for additional victim witness staff in

2       in both Denver, where the trials where will be  
3       held, and in Oklahoma City, where many victims  
4       will review the trial over closed-circuit  
5       television, and crisis counselling for victims  
6       in both cities throughout the trial.

7               In addition to working hard for these  
8       legislative changes, this administration has  
9       seen unparalleled growth in the crime victim's  
10      fund, which is administered by the Office for  
11      Victims of Crime.

12             This fund supports state compensation  
13      programs and about 2,500 victim services  
14      programs, such as battered women shelters, rape  
15      treatment centers, children's advocacy centers,  
16      and services to victims based in police and  
17      prosecutor's offices.

18             These are among the more than 10,000  
19      victim services programs nationwide to which  
20      you can refer victims for crucial services. In  
21      the first four years of this administration,  
22      deposits in the fund exceeded \$1 billion, more

1       than was deposited in the preceding 8-year life  
2       of the fund.

3               Over \$500 million was deposited last  
4       year alone. Since over 90 percent of these  
5       funds are distributed to states, this means  
6       that local victim assistance agencies will  
7       receive three times the amount of funds  
8       distributed previously.

9               With this additional money, states  
10       have an unprecedented opportunity to expand  
11       programs into many of the underserved areas of  
12       our country, such as rural areas and Indian  
13       country, as well as to underserved victims,  
14       including victims of gang violence and hate and  
15       bias crimes.

16              As you know, deposits to the fund are  
17       the product of the hard work of many of your  
18       colleagues. They are the results of criminal  
19       fines, penalty assessments and forfeited bail  
20       bonds paid by federal criminal defendants, and  
21       collected by the U.S. Attorneys, the U.S.  
22       Courts, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

1                   And without victims actively  
2     participating in the trial process, we could  
3     not have the convictions that result in these  
4     fines. We have made great strides in improving  
5     the criminal justice system's treatment of  
6     crime victims.

7                   But we have an awful lot more to do  
8     because, even in some of the major cities of  
9     this country, there are small children who do  
10    not have a rape treatment center that knows how  
11    to work with children in a sensitive,  
12    thoughtful manner.

13                  We still do not have people trained  
14    in how to explain the criminal justice system  
15    in ways that people can understand and  
16    appreciate. We have so very much more to do.

17                  One of the keys to what we have to  
18    do, though, is to get a victims' rights  
19    amendment to the Constitution of the United  
20    States passed. There is now strong bipartisan  
21    support for this effort.

22                  A victim's bill of rights, once a

1       novel idea, is now a reality in most every  
2       state.

3               In over half of our states, my own  
4       state of Florida included, have amended their  
5       state constitutions to ensure these crucial  
6       rights. But as I and the President recognized  
7       when he stated his strong support for this  
8       amendment last year, and in last week's State  
9       of the Union Address, there is still no  
10      consistency in the implementation of victims'  
11      rights nationwide, and no guarantee of crucial  
12      services for every crime victim.

13              Some have questioned the need for a  
14      victims' rights constitutional amendment. And  
15      I, like the President, certainly do not support  
16      amending the Constitution lightly. But I have  
17      long been an advocate for treating victims with  
18      dignity and with respect.

19              After carefully reviewing the issue  
20      of a federal constitutional amendment with  
21      lawyers in the Department of Justice, it is  
22      clear to me that victims' rights should be

1       secured by the United States Constitution.

2               The amendment should address crime  
3       victims rights to be informed of, and to be not  
4       excluded from public court proceedings; the  
5       right to be notified of major case events and  
6       the status of the offender; the right to be  
7       heard and present at the Court about release  
8       from custody, sentencing and pleas; the right  
9       to be heard by the Parole Board when it  
10      considers an offender's release; and the right  
11      to appropriate restitution.

12             What victims want is a voice, not a  
13      veto in our criminal justice system. For too  
14      long, victims have watched a court process  
15      unfold. They have watched meticulous attention  
16      given to the rights of defendants. They have  
17      asked for a voice, an opportunity to be heard,  
18      to know what was going on that could give real  
19      meaning to their participation.

20             We must ensure that.

21             Today victims' rights vary

22 significantly from state to state. The federal

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1 adult and juvenile justice systems in the  
2 military all provide different rights for  
3 victims. Fundamental rights for victims should  
4 apply in every form.

5 The Department of Justice is working  
6 with all involved to craft suitable language  
7 for such an amendment. We want to develop the  
8 most effective language possible to secure the  
9 rights of victims, while being careful, as the  
10 President cautioned, not to hamper the ability  
11 of criminal investigators and prosecutors to do  
12 their job, or to inadvertently provide  
13 defendants and convicted offenders ways to  
14 cripple the criminal justice process.

15 Even if we succeed in securing a  
16 constitutional amendment, we have to do more.  
17 I feel very strongly about this, because I  
18 participated in the passage of the  
19 Constitutional amendment in Florida. But then  
20 I saw, as I have on other occasions, that we

21 must make the words on that paper real.

22 We will have to continue our efforts

25  
1 in Congress and in our state legislatures to  
2 ensure funding to guarantee that those rights  
3 are enforced and that services are provided.  
4 That is our work, your work and my work, to  
5 ensure the laws we enact have life and meaning  
6 for victims of crime.

7 And we have seen such great  
8 creativity in the work that you all do to make  
9 sure that our laws are a reality.

10 Across America police and prosecutors  
11 are building partnerships, and taking policing,  
12 prosecution and corrections out in the  
13 community to hear and respond to the voices of  
14 victims and other representatives of the  
15 community.

16 In the District of Columbia, for  
17 example, United States Attorney Eric Holder has  
18 set up the first community prosecution unit.

19 Prosecutors are working out of the local

20 precinct. They attend neighborhood meetings.  
21 They get to know the people in their community.  
22 Community prosecution and policing,

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1 which put criminal justice officials in  
2 constant touch with the people they serve, help  
3 prosecutors and police respond to the major  
4 concerns in the community about crime, and the  
5 major concerns of victims who now have an  
6 opportunity to see the people who represent  
7 them in their own community.

8 And these programs increase the  
9 community's trust and cooperation with criminal  
10 justice officials. Partnerships like these  
11 draw on our nation's strong sense of community.  
12 We have seen how the country responds in times  
13 of great crisis. The tragic bombing in  
14 Oklahoma City illustrated this response with  
15 pictures of horror, but of magnificent heroism.

16 The Office for Victims of Crime  
17 immediately funded three crisis response teams,  
18 which were organized by the National

19        Organization for Victim Assistance, to debrief  
20        hundreds of school children, teachers and  
21        emergency workers.

22                    State and federal resources came

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1        together as never before, and to set up a  
2        standard of coordination, cooperation and  
3        partnership that we must strive to emulate in  
4        all that we do. Foreign governments  
5        participated. Turkey and Japan each donated  
6        \$10,000.

7                    Oklahoma school children received  
8        over 400,000 letters from around the world.  
9        When the case proceedings were moved to  
10       Colorado, hundreds of citizens there offered  
11       their homes, food and transportation to victims  
12       who wanted to attend the trial.

13                   But that wouldn't have been possible  
14       if it had not been for some very caring people  
15       on the ground in Oklahoma who had been touched  
16       by the tragedy. But people in the United  
17       States Attorney's office, law enforcement

18 agencies, rallied round, worked countless hours  
19 into the night, seven days a week, never giving  
20 up, trying to find family members, trying to  
21 keep people informed.

22 So much of the response in Oklahoma

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1 City was due to some very dedicated, wonderful  
2 people who worked for the Federal Government  
3 and who deserve the highest accolades that we  
4 can possibly give to public servants. Their  
5 example is an example for us all.

6 We can be the catalyst for these  
7 partnerships. You are the fulcrum of the  
8 victim-centered justice system. We know that  
9 we're doing something right when you hear  
10 victims write a thank you letter like that and  
11 we see tangible changes in the crime rate. We  
12 think we must be doing something right.

13 We watch crime go down. We can take  
14 pride in our work. But we cannot become  
15 complacent. It is never a good idea to rest  
16 simply on one's laurels. They get rather dry

17       and scratchy after awhile anyway.

18               Rather, we must look for new  
19       opportunities, better ways to serve, how we can  
20       do more with less, how we can make sure that  
21       last victim, or that last survivor, is  
22       contacted.

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1               Whether we can have that last bit of  
2       energy at 8:00 at night after we've been unable  
3       to reach a victim for three days running, to  
4       make that last call to make sure that they are  
5       okay and that they have been able to find  
6       transportation to get them to the service that  
7       we provided, that last extra step makes all the  
8       difference in the world.

9               The President has directed me to take  
10       all necessary steps to provide full victim  
11       participation in federal criminal proceedings,  
12       to hold the federal system to a higher standard  
13       of victim's rights than ever before.

14               An important part of his directive is  
15       taking place here.

16 All federal agencies whose missions  
17 involve them with crime victims must work  
18 together to ensure that a common and  
19 comprehensive baseline of participation of  
20 victims can be achieved. This is part of what  
21 our future work entails.

22 We must enhance federal services to

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1 victims. Working closely with the Office of  
2 Victims of Crime in the Office of Policy  
3 Development, we have expanded victim services  
4 and trainees, revised victim-witness brochures,  
5 and established emergency funds that can be  
6 used to assist victims for whom crucial  
7 services are unavailable.

8 For example, it can help to fund  
9 their travel to counselling and to pay for that  
10 counselling. The Office for Victims of Crime  
11 has just produced a training film on victims'  
12 issues for all employees of the Justice  
13 Department. You will be the first to see this  
14 film later this week, and should think how you

15       can use it within your own agency.

16               It highlights the laws about victims'  
17       rights and the importance of linking victims to  
18       the services they need to heal. It also  
19       emphasizes the importance of your work, each  
20       and every day.

21               We must also enhance our victims'  
22       services through technology. Technology can

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1       never take the place of a human arm of comfort  
2       and support, but it can help us reach more  
3       victims than ever before. It cannot take the  
4       place of a human voice on the telephone, but at  
5       least it can be the effort made to ensure that  
6       victims are informed.

7               One example is the National Domestic  
8       Hot Line. This hot line funded by (inaudible)  
9       links individuals in English or in Spanish, and  
10       with technology for the deaf, to help in their  
11       area by using a nationwide database that  
12       includes detailed information on domestic  
13       violence shelters, other emergency shelters and

14 legal advocacy assistance and social service  
15 programs.

16 It operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a  
17 week, and is a toll-free call from anywhere in  
18 our country. Opened last February, the hot  
19 line averages over 200 calls per day. What  
20 better example of bringing together federal,  
21 state, and local resources to reach victims  
22 when and where they need help.

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1 We must also make sure that,  
2 throughout our work, we keep victims at the  
3 center of the process. I have had this single  
4 opportunity of learning from the many  
5 remarkable people I meet each year during  
6 National Crime Victims' Rights Weekend in  
7 April.

8 People who are truly, truly making a  
9 difference for service to crime victims. They  
10 received the Crime Victims' Service Award, the  
11 highest federal honor for victims' advocacy.

12 Let me tell you about just one.

13 Marilyn Smith, deaf since the age of six, was  
14 brutally raped when young. At the time of her  
15 rape, there were no victim services for the  
16 deaf, which made her recovery needlessly long  
17 and lonely.

18 In 1986, Marilyn founded Washington  
19 State's Abused Deaf Women Advocacy Service,  
20 which now offers a 24-hour crisis line,  
21 counselling and legal advocacy for deaf and  
22 deaf/blind victims of sexual assault and

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1 domestic violence.

2 She is a tangible, inspiring example  
3 of what we can all do to reach victims who are  
4 still on the outside of the criminal justice  
5 process. If you ever have the opportunity to  
6 meet her, take full advantage of her. You will  
7 be able to go on doing better, more vigorous  
8 work the next year just by having listened to  
9 her and having felt the power of what she has  
10 done.

11 And we will need the support. There

12 is so much more work to do. You will hear and  
13 learn so much about victims at this conference,  
14 about how to best meet their needs. You will  
15 leave with long lists of work you want to do  
16 when you return, to put into action so many of  
17 the wonderful ideas you will hear and share  
18 here.

19 I'm going to ask you to put one more  
20 item on that list. I hope you will be an  
21 extension of my eyes and ears. Some of the  
22 best policy comes from victims. I do not see,

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1 on a daily basis, as many victims as you do.  
2 So as you listen to, learn from and work with  
3 victims, let me know what you find.

4 Talk to your supervisors, get in  
5 touch with the Office for Victims of Crime.  
6 Let us know of any gaps you find in the safety  
7 net that we are weaving together. Let us know  
8 what you think we can do better and what can be  
9 done differently to help victims achieve  
10 justice and to achieve healing.

11                   We will share your successes and your  
12       lessons with your colleagues. For you are the  
13       healers. It is a vitally important job. You  
14       are the lifeline for so many victims across  
15       America. And often, with your help, despite a  
16       devastating experience, victims heal and become  
17       even stronger human beings and greater  
18       contributors in so many important ways to their  
19       community.

20                   Helping with this healing process is  
21       a most extraordinary privilege and an honor.  
22       Thank you for the depth of your commitment, for

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1       the crucial work you do each and every day.  
2       From my point of view, you are but little lower  
3       than the angels.

4                   (End of Attorney General's  
5       Address.)

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