



1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
- - -
REMARKS OF THE HONORABLE JANET RENO,
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
TO THE
NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS
- - -

Independence Room A
Grand Hyatt Hotel
1000 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.
Thursday, February 26, 1998

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8

P R O C E E D I N G S

(6:48 p.m.)

VOICE: Could I have your attention. Could I get you folks to grab a seat. A very special guest has joined us. Good evening. Hello, and thank you one and all for coming to the NCI reception.

As I reported to you in our General Assembly, Attorney General Janet Reno said that she would be able to

9 come and visit with us and share some time with us this
10 evening in her schedule. So she has come and she has just
11 arrived. So it is a great pleasure to introduce Attorney
12 General Janet Reno, who has done such wonderful things for
13 Indian country.

14 Quiet down, folks. Quiet down. Could I have
15 your attention? Thank you, thank you.

16 Ever since this administration took office the
17 last term, one of the first things that they did was to
18 begin with the Listening Conference that included the
19 Department of the Interior, the Department of Justice, and
20 a number of other departments and agencies. One of the
21 participants back then was Janet Reno, Attorney General
22 for Department of Justice. She spent that whole time with
23 us, conversing with tribal leaders, trying to understand
24 what the issues are in our communities with regard to law
25 enforcement and courts and the issues of our concern in

3

1 protecting our sovereignty and tribal rights.

2 It has really been wonderful to have an Attorney
3 General that has become so knowledgeable about Indian
4 affairs, Indian law, and the concerns and the needs of our
5 communities. As many of you are aware, she's the one who
6 led the effort here to elevate the resources --

7 GENERAL RENO: -- The United States has
8 recognized Indian tribes as domestic nations under its
9 protection and guaranteed tribal self-government in
10 numerous treaties and agreements. Today, within the
11 framework of our government to government relations, the
12 United States continues to honor and to recognize the
13 right of Indian people to self-government. -- self-
14 government for Indian tribes, recognizes our Federal trust
15 responsibilities and traditional systems.

16 Let me briefly discuss with you the important
17 subject of law and order in Indian country.

18 That's the request, but we're going to fight
19 hard to see that that request is appropriated. And if
20 appropriated, these requested funds will be used to fight
21 violent crime, gang-related violence, and juvenile crime
22 in Indian country, and enhance tribal justice systems.

23 I think it's important, as I explained
24 yesterday, or the day before yesterday, before the Senate

25 Appropriations Subcommittee, it is important to understand

4

1 that it is not just gangs from within Indian country; it
2 is gangs that have come, young people that have come from
3 without to cause trouble. And we have got to be prepared.

4 Of course, I cannot emphasize enough that our
5 first job is to get Congressional approval for this
6 request. If Congress grants our budget request, money
7 will be used to fund grants to construct, modernize, and
8 repair correctional facilities and jails on Indian lands.

9 Yet even with these new funds, we would not have
10 enough resources to build separate facilities on every
11 reservation. So I will look to tribal leaders for ideas
12 for making the best use of these funds, including regional
13 detention facilities for Indian country. And I will look
14 to tribal leaders to help make sure that we use these
15 funds as wisely as possible.

16 If our request is granted, we must use the money
17 to ensure that there are detention facilities that are
18 appropriate for adults and for juveniles and to ensure
19 that juvenile facilities have appropriate services and
20 programs for the education and the welfare of the young
21 people. It doesn't make any sense to put a young person
22 in a jail, in a detention facility, and not provide for
23 education that will help them to deal with the issues
24 afterwards.

25 (Applause.)

5

1 And provided that we secure the funding, let us
2 work together to make sure that tribal traditions are
3 reflected in the detention facilities. One of the most
4 moving moments for me in these almost five years that I
5 have been Attorney General was to go to my law school,
6 Harvard Law School, to a Listening Conference at the law
7 school and to hear tribes tell me, "Look, you just want to
8 find guilt or innocence; you just want to blame somebody;
9 we want to heal, we want to find the problem and solve the
10 problem that caused the crime in the first place; we want
11 to bring people together and heal the wounds."

12 And we can learn so much from those traditions,
13 and those traditions have got to be a part of the

14 correctional programs and facilities that we help to fund.
15 Contingent upon Congressional approval of our
16 request, \$54 million of the amount would fund more tribal
17 police officers and law enforcement training, to enhance
18 efforts to fight violent crime, gang-related offenses, and
19 juvenile crime.

20 \$10 million would be used to fund Indian tribal
21 courts to meet burgeoning caseloads. \$10 million would be
22 used for drug testing, treatment, and sanctions in Indian
23 country to fight substance abuse.

24 It's eight years ago now that we established a
25 drug court in Dade County, Florida, where I served as a

6

1 prosecutor. I wanted something that gave people an
2 alternative as they came into the court system and into
3 the judicial system with a drug problem, and we developed
4 a carrot and stick approach: Work with us and we'll help
5 you with training, with education, with job placement;
6 don't work with us, come back testing positive for drugs,
7 and you're going to face a more certain sanction each step
8 of the way.

9 But what if we listened to tribal traditions.
10 Can you give us further insight? Can we help design
11 programs for you? Can we listen to you to find out how
12 best to set up and establish programs that provide for
13 testing, for treatment, for intervention, and for making
14 our young people whole again?

15 \$20 million of the requested funds would be
16 dedicated to tribal juvenile justice initiatives. Again,
17 you know far better than I do how to reach out to the
18 young people of a particular tribe, how to prevent crime,
19 how to give them wonderful opportunities. Let us work
20 together to do that.

21 As part of our fiscal year '99 budget request,
22 we are also seeking 30 more FBI agents, 26 assistant
23 United States attorneys, and 31 victim witness
24 coordinators to assist in this effort.

25 At the same time, the Department of Interior

7

1 will also take steps to improve BIA law enforcement.

2 Reducing violent crime is critical to the safety

3 of Indian country and the safe and stable community life
4 that is essential to true self-determination for Indian
5 nations. A great leader once said, "Let us put our minds
6 together and see what lives we can make for our children."
7 And I ask you tonight and in these weeks to come: Let us
8 put our minds together, see what we can get Congress to
9 pass, and then see truly what life we can make for our
10 children.

11 Let me say a few words in that regard about
12 economic development in Indian country. A few tribes have
13 made important gains through Indian gaming and some tribes
14 have made gains through industrial or agricultural
15 development. Yet most American Indians and Alaska Natives
16 are among the poorest people of our Nation.

17 The 1990 census reported that 42 percent of
18 American Indian and Alaska Native children under five
19 years old live in poverty. They may live in a poverty of
20 dollars, but they don't need to live in a poverty of
21 spirit and tradition and the environment of tribal
22 traditions. We must work together to give them that
23 opportunity.

24 Last summer the Office of the Comptroller of the
25 Currency and the Department of Justice co-sponsored a

8

1 conference on banking in Indian country. This year, in
2 cooperation with USDA, Commerce, Interior, and the Small
3 Business Administration, we are planning a conference on
4 doing business in Indian country.

5 It is important for tribal leaders, industry
6 leaders, and agency officials to discuss unique features
7 of doing business, how to build a positive environment for
8 business, and how to use new technologies to overcome the
9 problems of distance to the marketplace.

10 I am interested in your ideas about how to
11 promote dialogue and cooperation between tribes and
12 industry in this area of mutual concern, because if we
13 give the child an opportunity for a life that he or she
14 can treasure, what good is it going to be if we can't find
15 that child a job, a job that will enable them to maintain
16 their tribal traditions and live on their tribal lands and
17 appreciate the air and the sky and the waters that their
18 ancestors knew and loved, but at the same time having an

19 opportunity to participate in the economy of this Nation.

20 I think it can be done. One of the things that
21 I've discovered is that young people know an awful lot
22 about computers, a lot that I don't know, and that you can
23 do an awful lot in distance, and I think their ancestors
24 would be extraordinarily proud of young Indians across
25 this land who took the new technologies to maintain their

9

1 presence on their tribal lands while at the same time
2 participating around the world in the economies that are
3 opening up because of the marvels of computers.

4 That is just one example. There is so much that
5 we can do if we come together to see how we can work
6 together to give our children a future.

7 Finally, I know that you also face challenges on
8 issues of federal and tribal government relations. Last
9 year Secretary Babbitt and I opposed federal income
10 taxation of tribal government revenues because you need
11 your tribal government revenues to build schools,
12 hospitals, roads, and because such taxation would run
13 counter to our treaty pledges to protect tribal self-
14 government.

15 We also opposed legislative proposals to waive
16 tribal sovereign immunity, that would have undercut your
17 tribal government functions and threatened tribal
18 treasuries.

19 (Applause.)

20 You may face similar challenges this year.
21 Please stay in touch with my Office of Tribal Justice as
22 issues of concern develop. And I'd like to thank
23 everybody in that office -- Tom, Mark, Craig, who have made
24 such a difference.

25 At the Listening Conference in Albuquerque they

10

1 told me: Nobody is in the -- we don't know where to go in
2 the Justice Department to be heard, to be heard in the
3 Solicitor General's Office, to be heard in ENRD, to be
4 heard in the Criminal Division. It's a big Department and
5 we don't know where to go.

6 I haven't heard anybody tell me that in a long
7 time, Tom, and I thank you very much for all the work that

8 you and your colleagues have done.

9 In conclusion, I would remind all Americans that
10 our Nation is a great land, a land where we all cherish
11 liberty, freedom, and justice for all of our people. To
12 American Indians, liberty, freedom, and justice mean the
13 right to continue to live according to tribal laws, to
14 tribal customs, and to tribal traditions in their own
15 lands. I want to work with you to make sure that you have
16 the liberty that you cherish.

17 Thank you.

18 (Applause.)

19 VOICE: I want to express my appreciation for
20 the Attorney General. She probably has about 15, 20
21 minutes to mingle among us and converse with the tribal
22 delegation.

23 I want to thank David Ogden, her counselor, who
24 is here with her, and Tom LeClaire and Mark Van Norman and
25 Craig Alexander, who have been staffing that office, that

11

1 cares for Indian affairs.

2 With that, I think we'll close the opening
3 comments and let the Attorney General mingle among the
4 tribal leadership.

5 (At 7:04 p.m., end of remarks.)