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**JANET RENO'S SPEECH**

**REPORTED BY OSMUND D. MILLER, CSR**

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

MR. VANMEVEREN: Thank you, Councilwoman Green, for those wonderful words of wisdom and the wonderful welcome you gave us. We appreciate that.

Janet Reno is the first woman Attorney General of the United States of America. She was nominated by President Clinton almost eight years ago, in 1993, and sworn in as the nation's 78th Attorney General on March 12th of 1993. I don't think many of us know much background of our Attorney General so let me just say a few words.

She attended public schools in Dade County Florida. She was a debate champion at Coral Gables High School. And after high school, a few years ago, she enrolled at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, where she majored in, of all things, chemistry. After graduation she enrolled at Harvard University Law School. But while an undergraduate at Ithaca, New York she put her own way through college and she worked as a waitress and a dormitory supervisor. She enrolled at Harvard and she was only one of 16 woman in a class of 500. She graduated three years later with a degree

and looked for a job in Miami, and she applied at one of Miami's biggest law firms, and they denied her a position because she was a woman. Fourteen years later that same firm made her a partner.

In 1973 Janet Reno accepted the position with the Dade County State's Attorney's Office which has jurisdiction over the greater Miami area. Subsequently, five years later, Florida Governor Rubin Askew appointed her as the state's attorney for Dade County and she was reelected to that office four times. She is responsible for an office of 940 employees and an annual budget of 30 million dollars, a docket of more than 100,000 cases a year. She focused her attention on prevention programs and enabled children to grow in a safe constructive environment. She also established the Miami drug court, which I believe was the first in the nation and has been a model for the 600 other drug courts we now have in our country.

As Attorney General of the United States, she has built a Department of Justice that reflects a diverse government of the people, by the people and for the people, making integrity, excellence and professionalism the hallmarks of her office and her service as our Attorney General. Please give Attorney General Janet Reno a warm welcome. (Applause.)

JANET RENO: Thank you, Stuart. Thank you Mr. Tucker for a wonderful, wonderful city that has made me feel very welcome, and, Councilwoman Green, thank you so very much. You put the issue where it should be, on children.

Happy birthday, everybody. I felt so at home last night talking with many of you, seeing some old friends and sharing some of the experiences that we have all had as prosecutors. I listened to your latest challenges, your latest projects, and I thought back over how I got to be a prosecutor and what it has meant to me.

My father was a police reporter for the Miami Herald and he never went to the Herald. He kept his office in the police station and he covered the courts, the police and everything that went on in the courthouse because it was

1944 and we were at war.

My first memory is going to work with him when I was about six years old, going to the courthouse, seeing a criminal trial in process, and every time things got livid in the judge's words, daddy had to take me out, and I said, wait a minute, I want to find out whether he was guilty or not.

The first summer job I ever had was in the Dade County sheriff's office. It was a small little office, the jail, the lab, everything but the road patrol was on about five floors of the courthouse. I look at what it has become now and I look at the technology and the tools that are available to law enforcement, and it staggers the imagination. But during all of this, I swore I would never be a prosecutor, I am still not sure why in retrospect, I went to work for the Florida legislature and in 1972 I ran for the legislature and I was defeated, and that is one of the best things that ever happened to me, because the next morning Richard Gerstein had one of his chief assistants call me and offer me a job, and I said, he doesn't want me to come to work for him, I have always been the prosecutor's critic, and the response was, he says you can come do something about it yourself.

Well, instead of criticizing prosecutors I started understanding more clearly what the role of the prosecutor was, how challenging the position could be, and how critically important it was to a community. A little bit later as Stuart has pointed out, Governor Askew appointed me State Attorney when Richard Gerstein resigned. He said, I understand that some people think I appointed her just because she was a woman. The governor who was very puritanical upon occasions, said, but I didn't do that, I appointed her because she stacked up better. And he didn't realize what he had said.

And now after over 25 years as a prosecutor, I can say it has been the most rewarding experience that any lawyer can have. I found rather than denying protection to the innocent, that a good prosecutor can do more than anybody else, any other single person, to protect the innocent. And I think that is one of our most important functions and one

that I watch prosecutors engage in day after day.

I discovered as I knew instinctively that convicting the guilty according to principles of due process and fair play had a greater impact in terms of human life and saving human life on some occasions and in providing people with a sense that their rights can be vindicated than almost any other form of government action. I discovered that you can give people a second chance. Sometimes you make a mistake and, boy, do you get it in the paper the next day. But it shouldn't stop you, because I remember the man who came up to me in a downtown office building in Miami and said, thank you for arresting me. And I said, I didn't arrest you, sir. He said, you are right, but when I got arrested for drugs, your prosecutors gave me a chance, they got me into treatment. I had lost my family, I had lost my job, I had hit rock bottom, I had no money, I didn't know where to go, and they gave me a second chance. I have been drug free for two years, I have got my family back, I have got a job. And it is those moments that you never forget.

I continued to collect child support in Miami, and when a woman broke through the rope line at a dedication of a new church in South Carolina, built after the old church was destroyed by arson, and she says, Janet, how are you, I haven't seen you since Miami. You got me child support in Miami. And she gave me a big hug as if I were her best friend. And then she said, and these are the two you got me child support for. And there were two grown men both doing well that made me feel like this is one of the best jobs that you could ever have. It gave me a chance to solve problems.

Stuart has alluded to the drug court. I didn't establish the drug court, there were the judge and the public defender and others who came together, a small group, to establish a drug court which has made a difference in that community. And early on we focused on domestic violence because the medical examiner showed me that 40 percent of all homicides in Dade County up until that time in the last 20 years were related to domestic violence. And we focused, Councilwoman, on children, because the doctors took me to the public hospital in 1984 when the crack epidemic hit, to

try to figure out what to do about crack involved infants and their mothers, and you realize what good is all the punishment going to be when the child doesn't even understand the concept of reward and punishment and conscience, concepts developed during the first three years of life.

In short, I came away from 15 years as a prosecutor in Miami convinced that it was the best job you could have, one of the hardest jobs and one of the most rewarding.

I have got six months left of another job, also a prosecutor, that has been so rewarding because I have had an opportunity to see prosecutors in action across this country. I had an opportunity to watch the American people in action. I have never been so proud of prosecutors and I have never been so proud of the American people.

We have tried to build a partnership and I hope that partnership will go on. But I intend to go home at the end of this term, get in my red truck, which I hope I have purchased by then, and take off and knock on some of your doors and sit and talk with you for a longer period of time than I have had the chance. I hope to continue to support your efforts across the country and I would like to leave you with some challenges.

You have a position as a leader in your community that few can match. As advocates, as problem solvers, as people who bring and can bring a community together, I want to challenge you to continue the efforts that you have started.

Crime is down now seven years in a row. We can become complacent and we can turn to other things, and we can watch it go up as I have done on too many occasions over the last 25 years, but I think if we continue to work together, both those of us who will be in the private sector and those as prosecutors, we can end the culture of violence in this country as we have known it. Violence at the level it exists now does not have to be, and what I would challenge you to do is develop a comprehensive approach, which many of you have already pursued, that

first of all analyses what violence exists in your community and what generates it.

I used to worry about the convenience store robberies that were committed by the fellow that had the green Oldsmobile with the battered right fender. I was sure that if I could get all the arrest reports and incident reports collated, I could get a lot more leads on who was involved. But let us use computers, let us use technology and develop data bases. But data bases won't do much good if you don't have trained analysts who know how to use them and how to read them and how to put down just what the problem is. Let us use the data bases to collect information from the arrest reports, the incident reports, emergency room admissions, let us use university experts who oftentimes will volunteer their time to become involved in this effort. What is the nature of the crime in your community? Is it for drug organizations, which is the most serious? Use that data to prioritize. Is it street gangs or organized crime, domestic violence, armed career criminals, civil rights, violence, violence generated by hate learned in prison, terrorism, serial killers or suicide?

Let's look at what the tools of crime are. Is it drugs? Meth is the emerging drug now. What are we going to do about it? What do we do about guns? How do we build programs with the U.S. Attorney that can make a difference and that doesn't work based on who gets the credit or whose turf it is, but what's in the best interest of the community. And with that partnership plan, plan in a nonpartisan way. I have been to too many places in America now where the Republican DA stands with the Democratic U.S. Attorney and Democratic Attorney General and the Republican mayor and talks about what's in the best interest of that community. If we do nothing else, we have got to start looking at crime as we have always looked at foreign policy and develop crime initiatives in this country that are based on good old common sense, hard data, strong planning and strong partnership that is not divided and torn apart by partisan political rhetoric coming from either side. Let us then look at what are the real bases for the plan. Who should handle what? If the federal government can cross boundaries you can't cross, let them do it. If you can do

it better, let's by all means let you do it. Let us balance prevention with punishment, reentry with intervention. Let us focus on our children in problem solving. Let us look at tools. One is just good old fashioned effective firm prosecution. But then more and more of us have joined together with public health experts. When the criminal justice system and the public health discipline come together, we can do so much more. Ladies and gentlemen, let us focus on our courts as a marvelous forum for problem solving and for achieving justice.

It became clear to me and one of the reasons the drug court was developed was because the courts had become spread too thin. The courts in America over the last 30 years became the institution that the failures of other institutions came to at the end of the line, after family, schools, neighborhoods and others had failed. The courts were totally overwhelmed with the numbers that came. Let us fashion something in juvenile courts, in dependency courts, in domestic violence courts that says this is a caseload a judge can manage and make a difference, these are the resources he needs to get the job done. This is the time it's going to take, and then let us not cut corners, because the more we see of model courts developed across this country, the more we see lives saved and money saved because there is not a revolving door. Courts can be a tremendous institution for good in this country if we give them a real chance to do justice in all ways.

Let's use our technology, but let us master our technology instead of letting technology master us. Let us understand that you can do just so much with technology in terms of proof and determination of the truth that it will always take the human element to ultimately achieve the truth. And then let us problem solve with meth.

We watched crack creep up on this nation. I remember in 1984 we didn't know what it was. People said it was cocaine, but it wasn't cocaine and it came and hit us with a resounding blow in community after community across this nation. Let us come together and develop a comprehensive plan for each community on meth. Developing meth specific treatment opportunities for everyone, developing public

service announcements that make clear to the community what meth can do to you, and how insidious it is, experts are you now telling us it can be more insidious than crack because you can function longer in a job or otherwise than you could with crack before you hit rock bottom. Let us develop means for cleaning up labs in a comprehensive way, of sharing data between jurisdiction, but let us move and problem solve and not stand by and watch it hurt community after community. Let us focus on street gangs and domestic violence in the same way and problem solve. Domestic violence has been sometimes an intractable phenomena, but unless we end violence in the homes, we are never going to end it on the streets of America.

I think we have got to go further than the criminal justice system, we have got to step back to the lawyer advising a young couple just upon marriage, to the priest, to the doctor, to the pediatrician, making clear to everyone that domestic violence is unacceptable and that we do not have to accept it, it should not be a part of anyone's life.

Let us look at how we deal with young men coming home from prison. They get stopped so often because they seem the likely subjects. What so many of them want is to get off on the right foot, to make a difference, to become involved, and every time they think they finally made it, they sometimes feel pushed down. Let us be fair to them and give them a strong and helping hand, but give them the firm and certain knowledge that if they mess up, they are going to be held accountable.

With all of these issues with respect to violence we still face another challenge, a challenge as daunting, a challenge in many respects as important. How do we deal with cyber tools and cyber crime in a way that protects the constitution as we have known it, protects our privacy, and yet pursues those who use the cyber technology of today around the world to inflict harm on others.

I think it is going to be important that we work together, and Bob Johnson and I have discussed ways that we can do that in the six months that we have, and I expect to be in touch with you this week on how we can do that. But let me



share with you something that I think is important.

The industry had not really paid much attention to law enforcement. They scoffed at law enforcement. They said law enforcement is going to invade our privacy, it's going to reduce our sense of innovation, it's going to try to control us. And I have consistently told them that law enforcement, if it was done right, was supposed to protect privacy, it was supposed to give people freedom to innovate, and that we could work together. They didn't listen to me, and I thought they are going to have to be zapped by some cyber criminal before they understand. And here came the intrusions and the denial of service attacks and they were knocking on our doors.

We had a meeting in the cabinet room with the President and representatives of industry, we heard from them, and I asked them if it would be helpful if we had a conference on cyber issues and what law enforcement could do to be a better responder to these issues. We had a meeting at Stanford Law School and then one recently in Herndon, Virginia, the Silicon Valley of the east as it is developing.

Ladies and gentlemen, you would have thought I was listening to a robbery victim. I don't know who to call, I am worried about my name in the paper, nobody tells me what happens, nobody explains it to me. The sentences aren't tough enough, it takes too long, all my employees have their depositions taken. Woe is me. And what I said is, and, Janet, woe is you for not getting the message out earlier. I called the director of our office of victims of crime, we are organizing and we would like to organize with you to see how we can deal with this issue in terms of victims support and victim understanding so that we resolve these issues. I think it is also important that we meet together to figure out how we deal with the issues of borders, state borders and nation borders, because cyber tools have made them meaningless.

How do we go after the Frenchman's--how does the French government go after the Frenchman's computer if he is a customer of America On Line, and although he has never

stepped foot outside France, his computers data is stored somewhere near Dulles. How do you go from one state to another? Much is being done in this and I think we should be in it together to ensure that we leave no gap.

But finally I would like to close with a thought. Police and prosecutors represent government to the people more clearly and in a more defined way than any other representative of government. Ours is an extraordinary government, a government of the people with constitutional limitations.

One of the great privileges that I have had as Attorney General is to watch ministers of justice, attorney's general and others from the emerging democracies of eastern Europe come to my conference room. They come first with stars in their eyes, they are so excited, they have fought so hard, they have risked their life, they have risked their lives of their families because they believe so deeply in democracy. Sometimes they come back looking sad, down, and frustrated, and then I have heard that they have left office.

You realize that democracy is very fragile, but you realize how absolutely wonderful an institution it is. How much we must cherish it and how we must never ever take it for granted.

And then about a week ago I went to stand on the plains at Runnymede to speak about access to justice. I could see the barons forming in the meadow below, a rowdy bunch, demanding rights because the king had ignored them and had been indifferent to them. The barons got their rights but I fear they did not speak out sufficiently for all people. And I think we must, and prosecutors can and must lead the way.

There was a clause in the Magna Carta that said, to none shall we deny or delay right or justice.

There are still too many people in America today who do not have access to justice because they cannot afford a lawyer

and they cannot see the law as real to them. But you know as well as I do who they call. They call the State Attorney or the District Attorney to solve their problem. And in many instances we cannot, but we can often refer or then we can develop institutions and processes that help them.

You have a great role in cherishing the democracy we hold so dear, of making people believe that somewhere in government is somebody who can be responsive to their needs or refer them to the right place.

Secondly, we must never ever forget how horrible it must be to be sitting in one's house, have a knock on the door and have someone tell you that they have a warrant for your arrest for a crime you did not commit and for which you are totally innocent.

We have a special burden to make sure that the law seeks the truth and does the truth. Yes, we can use technology to help prove innocence, but it takes more than that. It takes objectivity. And I think today there is a tendency sometimes in law enforcement when you get one clue or two clues, to pursue those clues almost with blinders on, not picking up the signs along the way that indicate it's somebody else. Keep those blinders off and pursue the truth because you are the best source of government to pursue truth.

I watch other people debate facts. None debates facts like a prosecutor. No one else has to prove something beyond and to the exclusion of a reasonable doubt, and you know what truth means better than anyone else. And to get to the truth it requires that tenacity of prosecutors that few have, that tenacity to dig and to dig, and then when something doesn't seem right, to keep on digging until the facts fall in place.

Finally, we have got to make sure that the law as we know it is applied on behalf of and to its people in a fair, respectful and constitutional manner that will give all people the feeling that we have done right by them.

I have been stopped by people I have sent to prison saying, Hi, how are you? I am doing okay now and I appreciate the way you handled the case.

Prosecutors to me are among the great people of public service. Those of you I know are included in those ranks. Those of you who I have not met, knowing this association, I have no doubts but that you are leaders. Let us go forth from this day, I in the six months I have remaining, you for the time that you are in office, and lead our communities and our nation towards one ultimate goal, putting the people of this nation first, holding them accountable in a fair way, giving each person the opportunity to be their very best. Because, ladies and gentlemen, you have seen your communities, I have seen America's communities, and the American people are great, they care so much, they want so for their nation to do right, they want so for people to lead in fair respectful terms, and they will join us and go with us. With them we can end the culture of violence, with them we can master cyber technology and other technologies, and we can leave this world a better place for our public service.

Thank you so much for all that you do for this country.  
(Applause).

MR. VANMEVEREN: I don't know if many of you know, but Attorney General Reno has been a wonderful friend to our association and to state and local prosecutors. She comes to most of our summer conferences. I think the first one was in Rapid City, South Dakota seven or eight years ago, maybe seven years ago, and she has been a great friend of ours. I just want to say we just thank you dearly for being such a good friend and supporter of us. Thank you for sharing your insights with us, we are going to hate to see you go in six months, but we will be looking for you--

JANET RENO: Watch out for the red truck.

MR. VANMEVEREN: We only hope that the next Attorney General shares the same beliefs, the same dedication, the same energy and the same spirit of cooperation as Attorney

General Reno has.

(End of speech.)