

**REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR ACTING DIRECTOR CATHERINE PIERCE AT THE
STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND STATE COALITIONS CONFERENCE**

San Francisco, CA
Tuesday, February 2, 2010

Thank you Karol for taking the time out of your demanding schedule to be with us this week and thank you for being a constant source of support to OVW and our work. Your dedication to ending violence against women energizes us to carry on the important work we have been given to do.

I'd like to echo Karol in thanking all of you for joining us in San Francisco this week. You play such a critical role in implementing the VAWA and we are grateful.

This week we are pleased to join all of you- working at the state-level through the oldest program at the Office, the STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program, as well as those in our newest and much-needed programs, the Sexual Assault Services Program.

And I also want to welcome the Directors of the state domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions. You and your organizations are providing critical training and technical assistance to the member people who are providing direct services to survivors. There is an incredible need for direct services throughout the country, and we are grateful to the Coalitions who are helping to meet this need.

As many of you know, I have been with the Violence Against Women Office for nearly 15 years – since we first opened our doors in January, 1995 - shortly after the Violence Against Women Act was signed into law in 1994.

I am interested in how many of you were working in the state agencies charged with administering VAWA funds and in state coalitions in 1995? 2000? 2005? Since then? We have quite a history.

Since President Obama appointed me as Acting Director one year ago, the role of the Office on Violence Against Women and its mission has been one of the Department's main priorities.

We have seen so much progress since the VAWA was passed 15 years ago. The credit goes to the thousands of organizations, state, local and tribal governments that are supported with VAWA funding to help survivors heal in the aftermath of trauma.

Countless lives have been saved, the voices of survivors have been heard, and families have been protected. **BUT THERE IS STILL MUCH MORE TO BE DONE.**

We have federal resources and we have a strong commitment from our President, Vice President, and Attorney General. But that is not enough. We need one another. WE need to work together more so than ever before to bring about a significant shift in our culture.

In recognition of the 15th anniversary of the VAWA, the Department of Justice has mounted a year-long effort to raise public awareness, and to build a stronger movement to end violence against women and girls.

We have embarked on an ambitious and successful effort to reach public figures, actors, athletes, musicians and professional sports players and asking them to take a public stand against violence against women and girls. I especially want to thank Mariska Hargitay, who is here with us today, for having been the first to say yes and to committing to do whatever she can do to end sexual and domestic violence- and all forms of violence against women and girls. As you will see- she is an extraordinary advocate.

And the leadership of the Department of Justice, including the Attorney General Eric Holder and Associate Attorney General Tom Perrelli, has taken every opportunity to participate in public awareness raising events. Just last week, Associate Attorney General Perelli joined three U.S. Senators on Capitol Hill to announce that Teen Dating Violence Awareness Week will now be observed throughout the month, making February Teen Dating Violence month, and giving this serious and growing problem parity among the other three crimes (DV, SA and Stalking) authorized as part of the Violence Against Women Act.

Along with our year-long commemoration of the 15th Anniversary, the entire Department embarked on an unprecedented tribal public safety initiative.

After the Attorney General concluded a Tribal Listening tour last year, he announced sweeping reforms intended to improve public safety on tribal land. The new directive is part of a larger Justice Department initiative to create better communication and coordination to fight crime and promote justice in Indian Country and in Alaskan Native Villages.

In the future, tribal governments will be able apply to all DOJ tribal programs through a consolidated solicitation that will allow them to confront public safety issues in a holistic inclusive way.

Addressing violence against women is one of the major priorities of the tribal Public Safety Initiative and you will be hearing more about that tomorrow.

The effect on children who are exposed to violence continues to be a priority for the Department and the Office on Violence Against Women.

We also continue to work on launching other new programs this year: the Court Improvements Program, the Services to Advocate and Respond to Youth Program, Engaging Men and Youth.

We continue to review and monitor our American Recovery and Reinvestment Act awards and I would be remiss if I did not give special thanks to all of you for getting the money out the door

and for submitting timely and accurate reports. As I said before, we cannot do our jobs without your help, and your continuing role in this process is very much appreciated.

I know you are all curious about the status of the new OVW Director. Last October, the President nominated Judge Susan B. Carbon from New Hampshire to be OVW's Director. Judge Carbon testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee late in 2009 and her nomination was sent for by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Her nomination is still pending Senate confirmation and we are very hopeful that she will be confirmed in the weeks to come.

And finally, I want to give special recognition to the STOP and State Coalition representatives who participated in the STOP Conference Planning Committee for planning the workshops and identifying presenters for the conference:

A very special thank you to Cat Fribley and her Iowa Coalition staff, Karma Cottman and her NNEDV staff, and Lori Crowder and her ALSO staff, for your incredible efforts work in bringing together this conference.

I want to say how pleased I am that, Michelle Brickley, who has been with our office since 1999, is transitioning to the new Associate Director of the STOP, State Coalitions, and SASP programs. I have worked closely with Michelle for many, many years and have great faith in her.

In 2006, she led the development of the Culturally and Linguistically Specific Services program and she continues to oversee the launch of that program. And most recently, we asked her to join the senior management staff as our sixth Associate Director. Please join me in welcoming Michelle.

I want to especially recognize the staff that makes up the unit: Rudelle Handy, Myrta Charles, Latinisha Felli, Omar Mohammed, Kim Galvan, Kathrina Peterson, Kevin Sweeney, Melissa Schmisek and JuliAna Grant.

Finally, I want to recognize Darlene Johnson, who has made extraordinary and tangible improvements in the administration of the STOP and State Coalitions programs since she became Associate Director 5 years ago. Through her leadership and initiative, we now have a yearly STOP Conference, a biannual joint STOP administrator and state coalitions conference, technical assistance and resources for states to develop VAWA implementation plans, and a comprehensive technical assistance program for States and Coalitions. Darlene has worked tirelessly as a kind and spirited advocate on behalf of women.

What many of you may not know is that Darlene wove together a tight team of Program Specialists who supported each other and hold one another to very high standards despite their considerably large grant loads. She is revered and admired by her team.

Darlene has worked steadfastly to untangle problems and has worked tirelessly to provide you with answers to complex and never-ending questions. When the Recovery Act was passed she

stepped up immediately to sort through the best way to get funding out to ever state and state coalition as quickly as possible and THEN she made certain 2009 awards were also made on a timely basis. Darlene is an extraordinary colleague and has made numerous contributions to OVW beyond her work with STOP and State Coalitions. For all these reasons, we honor her today.