SPEECH

by

ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO

to

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS 41ST CONVENTION

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1:10 p.m.

PROCEEDINGS

(1:10 p.m.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you so very much. Of all the opportunities I have had to speak in these last 15 months, few have meant as much as this to me.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: For it was in 1971, when I worked as staff director of the House Judiciary Committee in Florida, that I came to understand the force and effect of the League of Women Voters. We were engaged in the revision of the judicial article of the Florida constitution, a subject that had been very difficult up until that time. The rest of the constitution had been revised, but the judicial article had failed in revision attempts because of the power of many judges.

I saw a network across Florida of women who were members of the League, who formed together to make sure that the revision was passed. And it is still in effect today, a living, evolving document that reflects so much of the effort of the League of Women Voters.

I watched as I would come to town, to talk to mayors, to talk to a group, to persuade them that they should vote for the constitutional amendment. And I would be met by League representatives who could give me savvy

political advice on how to deal with people, and talk about principle and theory in ways that it should be done.

It was at that time that I joined the League, because I had never seen such an effective community organization in action in all my time until that point.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: And since then, I have seen the League in Florida at work in so many different ways. My sister, now in her 19th year as a county commissioner in Florida, will tell you of the League's work in water management, in so many different areas. It is just truly a wonderful privilege for me to be here today with so many people who care. But, beyond caring, so many people who are so principled and, beyond principle, so many people who are so effective at getting the job done.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: And you have demonstrated that effort here in Washington. And I see your footprints everywhere. As I travel from office on the Hill to administrative office, I see the results of your work.

Your efforts to ban assault weapons was tremendous.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: You sensed where America was going and you led the way. And you proved that it could be done. Your work in the National Voter Registration Act has just been splendid. But it is so important to see what you have done. You not only helped to get a good, solid act passed, but then you followed up immediately to make sure that it is implemented and enforced.

You came to see the assistant attorney general in charge of the civil rights division to say, look, we need to do more. We are going to be at January 1st, and a number of States have not complied; what can we do now to get the show on the road?

As a result, we followed up with announcements, with letters to State election officials and State attorneys general. But it is an example again of the League, committed to process, committed to getting the job done.

And with that in mind, I would like to challenge you in an effort that you have probably already undertaken. It is difficult to get people to talk about it, because it is a matter of process. But it is a matter of process that is at the heart of this great Nation -- federalism.

When I came to Washington, I thought I would lose my sense of community. I was worried that I would not be able to go to community meetings, that I would not be able to sit down with police officers on the front line, social workers with overwhelming caseloads, public health nurses who were staggering under disease and epidemic. And I was concerned. I thought, will I lose my sense of people, my sense of community?

I was worried that, as I came to Washington, I would be swallowed up in a Federal bureaucracy that too often did not work together. I do not think that is happening. But I think all of us have got to be involved in a new undertaking -- how do we return government to the people?

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Can everybody here?

Okay.

That is a big undertaking. There is a statement on the building, the east side of the Department of Justice's building, that says, "The common law is derived from the will of mankind, issuing from the people, framed by mutual confidence, and sanctioned by the light of reason."

I think, too often, many Americans do not know what Title VII's and motor-voter bills and so many other

efforts passed by Congress mean. We hear the law and programs and procedures referred to in Roman numerals and alphabets and symbols, without talking to the American people about what the law really does. We sometimes make the civil rights law seem ominous to people, without talking about its marvelous liberating effect.

We make the Americans with Disabilities Act seem forbidding, when really we can comply quite easily, and open up great new vistas for so many people if we talk in small, old words that people can understand.

So, I came to Washington resolved to see what I could do about that. And the first effort I think we have got to undertake is to make sure that Federal agencies come together and work together in a cohesive and in a coordinated manner.

I used to sit in Miami and go to a meeting, and there would be three Federal agencies there. They did not know what each other was doing. They did not know about each other's programs. They overlapped, duplicated and fragmented. I mean, it made no sense. And the U.S. attorney, too often, did not know about any of the programs.

I think it is important, and my fellow cabinet members have been wonderful -- because I think they share the same feeling. HHS, HUD, Labor, Education, and Justice

are coming together to try to form their programs in a way that mesh with community programs and mesh with each other.

We find that Justice has conflict resolution monies and, for public schools, Education does. We want to work together to make sure those two programs are meshed together to make sense.

We need the League's attention to detail and your effectiveness and your understanding of process to help us work through years and years of cultural overlay, where each department seems to operate within its bureaucracy on its own.

We need to make sure that the family preservation effort in the Department of Health and Human Services is linked with the family strengthening effort in the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, so that we develop a national agenda that can give children a chance to grow in a strong and positive way.

But then we have got to do more. We have got to realize that the Federal Government is not going to solve the problem. When I would go to these meetings, even if they did not know what each other were doing, they sure did have a good idea about what I should be doing or the local community should be doing.

(Laughter.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: And they would tell me so. And they would tell me they had a wonderful grant, but, sorry, I did not qualify for the grant because I could not meet these conditions, because I already had something in place for that and I just needed it for a slight variation.

And I recognize more than ever that communities understand their needs and resources far better than we understand them in Washington, a 1,000 or 3,000 miles away. And I wonder how this happened -- how the focus came to be on Washington. And I have thought about it a lot in this last year.

And I think what happened is that with the Depression, people began to look to Washington as a source for power for solving their problems. With World War II, people became even more convinced that Washington would solve their problems. With the civil rights efforts of the fifties and sixties, people looked to Washington for justice. In the seventies, they looked to Washington for money. In the eighties, they kept looking to Washington, but Washington was shifting the programs to the States without the dollars.

And what has happened in the last eight years in America is that communities, with their back up against the wall, are starting to be creative and bold and

learning to do more with less, and how to be more creative and imaginative and bold and innovative. And exciting things are happening in America's communities today. And we have got to tap those strengths and those bold innovations, and make them become true across America.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: There are many efforts under way -- the empowerment and enterprise zone effort that the Vice President is leading will become a reality within this next year. Our PACT program, where the five agencies have joined together to work with cities to show how we can work with them in addressing needs and resources identified by them, is beginning to take shape, and it is exciting.

There are individual programs, where we are looking to communities to say, look, what do you need? How can we support you?

We are in the process of forming a great new partnership of federalism -- a partnership where the Federal Government is not telling people what to do, but saying, look, involve all the people in your community. Develop a needs and resource assessment. Develop a plan. And then let us see how we can work together. But there are ingredients of that effort that must be made clear.

The community who sits in a city commission

chamber and says, this is our community's needs, these are our community's resources, this is our community's plan, will fail. The city commissioners that go out to the neighborhoods, go out to start hearing the people, all of the people, including that single mother in a housing project who feels disenfranchised, including that community activist that screams at county commissioners and city commissioners all the time -- screams at local prosecutors, too.

(Laughter.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Start involving all of the people. Start talking to young delinquents in detention facilities and ask them the question, what could have been done to prevent the problem in the first place? The cities and the communities of America that are beginning to work are listening to the people. And we have got to translate what they hear to Washington, and put together programs that respond to the people.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: There are initiatives underway that must be enacted in Washington in order for us to succeed. Health care has got to be addressed as a national issue.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: And, again, the League

has been wonderful in its leadership efforts in that regard. Welfare reform. The whole issue of the ban on assault weapons and weapons that can cut across State lines need to be addressed as a national priority.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: But we can do so much if we join in this partnership -- in a partnership that is marked by focusing on prevention programs. And America must stop waiting for the crisis to occur. We all know that a dollar spent up front is going to save us three dollars down the line in health care costs, in tragedies and injury and disease.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We have got to become more effective at selling the idea. If people do not care because of common humanity, we have got to let that hard-nosed businessman know that unless he makes this investment now, we will never be able to build enough prisons 18 years from now.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Unless he makes an investment in prenatal care now, he is going to be paying a lot more in taxpayers' dollars down the road. And if he does not care about it from that point of view, we have got to let him know that unless we make an investment in

children in America today, we will not have a work force that can fill the jobs that he has that can maintain his company as a first-rate company and maintain this Nation as a first-rate Nation.

We have all got to join together to sell that.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We have got to trust people. We have gotten so caught up in process because we do not trust people that we cannot do anything. You cannot do this and you cannot do that, and you have to fill out this paper first and that paper first, and you have got to measure this and do this report and do this. And you are so spent in trying to comply with the process that you are not engaged in looking at this remarkable outcome that you have set for yourself and doing everything bold and creative necessary to achieve that outcome.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We have got to deal with an issue that I see now more than I ever saw before. I was 365 miles from the nearest State border and all I had around me was bay and ocean. And so you did not think about regional issues as much as you do when you live in Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia, and suddenly New Jersey is across the way and Delaware is just down the road, and you

have got to think, if I have an impact here on crime and just force it across the border, that is not going to help. How do we develop new and creative ways of planning regionally?

We have got to address something that does not even effect government somehow or sometimes. And that is, how do we adjust the work places of America to recognize that the family is the best care giver of all, and that we can free family time to put children and family first, while at the same time being a more productive Nation? We have got to address this issue.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: As part of this partnership, we have got to explore new areas -- areas that are being charted now and where wonderful work has been done. For so long in America, K through 12 has been a magic number. It was the magic number because so often the family fulfilled the responsibility of educator in the first five years, and we did not need it.

Now, with both parents working, with single parents working, with children too often neglected but not sufficiently neglected to be determined to be dependent, we now have to focus on zero to five, expanding Head Start to zero, recognizing that those first three years are the most formative time in a person's life.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: You know, I came here in February of 1993. I was sworn in on March 12th. The rest of the cabinet had been in place. They had already had their retreat. I did not know the President beforehand. I did not know the company line. And I was asked questions and asked to speak, and so I opened my mouth and talked about what I had been talking about in Dade County, which was zero to three. The Washington press corps that covers the Justice Department looked at me like I was crazy.

And I got questions: What does the Attorney General have to do with zero to three? And I explained what the child development experts at Jackson Memorial Hospital, our public hospital in Miami, had taught me, and how delinquency and dependency could be addressed there far more effectively than delinquency and dependency programs 10 years down the road.

And they looked at me skeptically but kept asking. Now, it is so wonderful to see the Carnegie Foundation's Starting Points come out, to see people talking about it throughout the Nation. And you think, gee whiz.

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We have got to develop mechanisms or encourage States or communities to develop mechanisms that make zero to five as magic as K through 12, that make afternoons and evenings, when children are so at risk, times when we must focus on them. We have got to focus on that 40-year-old person who is out of a job, because America's jobs will be changing ever so rapidly, and one becoming obsolete, so that we have retraining, which is as much a part of education as K through 12 and zero through five.

We have got to think of school-to-work, and make sure that our kids graduate with skills that can enable them to earn a living wage. We have got to think of new and bold concepts that nobody is better at doing that than the League and nobody is better at doing that and seeing it gets done than the League.

We have a golden opportunity. So much has happened in Washington that makes it seem like it truly is possible. The first legislation passed and signed by the President was the Family Leave Act -- key to the development of a strong and positive future for our children and for their families. Health care has to get passed to give our children and their families a chance to grow in a strong and constructive way.

We have got to make sure that we have educare as

part and parcel of children's lives. Working in partnership with the private sector, with communities, we can do it.

We have got to make sure that every child in America is immunized. We have got to preserve families, rather than tearing them apart through foster care programs that cause drift after drift and month after month of a family disintegrated, rather than a family put together in a strong, constructive way.

We have got to support the schoolteachers of America.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Something is terribly wrong with a nation that pays its football players in the six-digit figures.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Pays a lawyer going to Wall Street, right out of law school, $60,000 or $70,000 a year, and pays its schoolteachers what we pay them, considering what we ask them to do. We have got to start --

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: It is so wonderful to me to see my young friends graduating from college. Their parents are lawyers. These kids want to be

schoolteachers. And I think there is a new feeling across this Nation that a schoolteacher can be so special and can make such an extraordinary difference.

And when the assistant attorney general for civil rights in the Department of Justice can stand up as he is being sworn in and describe how he grew up, raised by his mother and his grandmother in the south side of Chicago in a housing development, and that is was his sixth grade teacher, whom he then introduces to the assembled group, who taught him that he was special, and it was his eighth grade teacher who saw that he was special and got him into a program called Better Chance, that sent him to Harvard College and to Harvard Law School, you know the magic that schoolteachers can work in this world. Let's get behind them.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Let's get truancy prevention programs organized. It is so frustrating to hear the police say a good truancy program reduces daytime burglaries. But, Ms. Reno, what do I do when I am getting picked up for truancy at 9- and 10-years-old, taken back to the school and the school just sends him home on the bus because his momma will not come to get him? I say, let's get our communities organized so that the teacher, the police officer, the social worker, and the public

health nurse do a home visit together to find out what is happening.

And if we start knocking on doors then, we are going to find that 23-year-old woman who was a teen mother who has lost her sense of hope, lost the sense that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, lost the sense that she can get her high school degree, that she can be somebody, and is beginning to slip into crack addiction -- we can make the difference and stop it there.

Let's start focusing on how we craft an environment where people can grow to be self-sufficient, where that welfare law can be changed to let that mother know that when she goes to get a job, she is going to be somebody, that she will not be worse off than if she had not gone to work in the first place because of a welfare law that makes no sense.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Let us recognize what is happening in America, a tragedy that Marian Wright Edelman has called the worst crisis for young black children in America since slavery.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is 1994, but hear her message and then look at the Center for Disease Control's figures for 1992. There were 17 per 100,000 deaths for young white males age 15 to 24. There were 37 per 100,000

deaths for all young males in that age group from homicide. There were 159 per 100,000 deaths for young black males in that age group who died as a result of homicide. And in most instances, the assailant was the same race and the same sex. It started from an argument. It was usually not felony related. They usually knew each other. It was usually alcohol involved -- not drug involved. And it was usually done with a firearm.

Let's step in and start changing their world, and give them a chance to grow in a strong, constructive way. We have so much.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: But what about the perpetrator? What about the perpetrator of violence? At 14, sent to a school for youthful offenders. There for nine months at the most, in most overcrowded juvenile facilities. Returned to the community without after-care follow-up, job training and placement. Nothing done to continue to address the drug problem in the first place.

Let's make sense out of America's juvenile justice system. And if we have waited until it is too late, so that the child is declared delinquent, let us then make sure that that child is returned to the community with a half a chance of success after he comes back through job training programs and other support

mechanisms that can give him a fair, fresh start. But let us not give up on any generation in America.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: But I think we all have to take stock and remember that it is not government, even government that is local, that is going to do it. The answer ultimately lies with the American people. And it ultimately lies with the American people starting to put children and families first throughout this Nation.

I look at all that the League does in terms of volunteering. I look at the volunteers that I knew in Miami, and the countless hours they gave to the League and to other great endeavors. Let us not give so much that we forget the ones we love most at home.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I remember my afternoons and evenings, after school and during the summer. My mother worked in the home; my father worked downtown. My mother taught us to appreciate Beethoven's symphonies, to play baseball, to bake cakes. She spanked us and she loved us with all of her heart. And there is no child care in the world that will ever be a substitute for what that lady was in our life.

And yet I look now at all the young men and women struggling to get breakfast on the table and the

children off to school and the homework done and the children bathed and the dinner on the table. They do not have quality time with their children. Let us all work together to make sure we have time for those we love.

(Standing ovation.)

VOICE:

Yes, please state your name and where you are from.

QUESTION: Nancy Hester, President of the League of Women Voters of Dade County.

(Applause.)

QUESTION: First, I would like to say how proud we are of you and how very pleased I am to be able to make that comment in this convention.

(Applause.)

QUESTION: And, second, I would like to ask you to comment on immigration. That is an issue of very grave concern for the State of Florida and for a number of States represented here at this convention. We are really interested in some insight on Federal policy regarding the control of illegal immigration up front, and any proposals for reimbursement for social services provided to illegal aliens in this country.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: First of all, it is great to see you. Because not only is she the President

of the Dade County League of Women Voters, but our families have known each other all of my life.

(Laughter.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: As I told the Senate Judiciary Committee, I think immigration will probably be the most critical problem I face as Attorney General, except probably for youth violence, which, again and again, is an issue that has to be addressed.

We have very clear policies. First of all, we think we can make a difference and can have an impact on illegal immigration through beefed-up efforts of the Border Patrol and the whole processes of government.

Secondly, we want to focus on criminal aliens, on those that take up a lot of prison space and cause a lot of problems throughout America. We have instituted with the State of Florida a very novel process, where we are identifying illegal aliens in the State prison system. If Florida would just as soon have them gone as incarcerate them, we are trying to identify them and get them deported immediately.

At the same time, we have improved our institutional hearing process so that even when the State wants them to serve the full sentence, they will be immediately deported because the deportation proceedings will have already been commenced.

We are beefing up our efforts in terms of alien smuggling, which is a major problem all along the south Florida coast. The U.S. attorney has just returned some significant indictments. And we are trying to give them the tools to do the job by creating a close working relationship with the other Federal agencies and the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

We are taking steps to make sure that the asylum process works correctly. I was amazed -- if I had run the Dade County criminal justice system the way the Immigration and Naturalization Service was run, without automation, without the infrastructure, I do not see how the very dedicated men and women working for the Service have so often been able to do their job. They are trying to provide an increased number of asylum officers, streamline the process, make it fair, and get the job done while at the same time adhering to constitutional due process on the part of all asylum seekers,

We are trying to identify what I call asylum fraud -- the boilermaker applications that are obviously a sham -- and we are taking effective action against those who would perpetrate that fraud in an organized way.

We are looking at employer sanctions, first of all, to make sure that they are enforced, but, as with the National Voter Registration Act, to try to make the law

easily susceptible of compliance, to try to provide for employers telephonic verification systems so that they can, by telephone, verify that this person, who has a number of identifying pieces of information, is in fact legally in this country, but, at the same time, taking effective enforcement action against employers who consistently hire illegal aliens and who know absolutely what they are doing.

And, finally and as importantly, to make sure that we improve the process for legal immigration, and make that a dignified, appropriate, fair process. I had so many friends in Miami who suffered through delay after delay and uncertainty in terms of the naturalization process.

I am dedicated to doing everything I can to address the issue of how we build an Immigration and Naturalization Service that has the management structure and the infrastructure and the technology to get the job done right. I have a splendid Commissioner of Immigration, Doris Meissner, who is doing a wonderful job. And my job is to back her up. Because she knows a lot more about immigration than I do.

With respect to the issues close at hand, we are working with all the other agencies involved, the Department of Defense and the State of Florida, to address

the issue of those seeking asylum in Haiti. And we expect that that plan will go into effect shortly.

With respect to the social services and the State's expenses, the Congress, about eight years ago, authorized the Federal Government to compensate the States for criminal aliens detained in State prison systems, but they never provided any money.

(Laughter.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: And in the last eight years, no administration has asked for the money. We have a $350 million request pending before Congress for that. And we hope that that will be provided. We think that if you take that money and then try to get out of prison those that the State does not want in the prison, we can come close to meeting the needs.

With respect to the social services, the administration is working with the Urban Institute to identify -- we do not want illegal aliens here, but they are here, and in many instances, they are contributing to the revenue of a State through employment, through sales tax, through any number of other contributions -- and what we are trying to determine is, in working with the States, the big States, the most impacted, what is an appropriate formula. And the administration is committed to trying to work something out that would be fair to all concerned.

QUESTION: Thank you.

(Applause.)

VOICE: Microphone four.

QUESTION: Jacqueline Jacob-Berger, North San Mateo County, California.

You have just answered most of my questions that I had on my list for you, and I would like to express my appreciation for those remarks.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Well, let me add one dimension, because it really did not affect Dade County, and I wanted to try to be as specific as I could. On the Southwest border, it was very interesting, because there did not seem to be any rhyme nor reason for the deployment of Border Patrol agents along the Southwest border. They would be put out on the border without a car or a radio. They did not have the technology that would make them more effective. It did not seem to be well planned.

I have made two visits to the border now -- one to San Diego and one to Nogales. And what we are trying to do -- we started in El Paso with a very thorough border effort. We have now extended that to San Diego, since between those two points of entry, they account for about 65 percent of the apprehensions. It is already beginning to work in San Diego.

Even one of my most -- she has been wonderful to

work with, but Senator Feinstein is a great advocate for the people of the State of California, because she is constantly calling me. And she was recently on the border, and says that she is seeing the difference. And many other people are as well.

We have got to be prepared, as traffic patterns shift. But we are going to try to do it right. We are getting the infrastructure. They are getting night lamps, infrared scopes, automation. We are getting the agents to the field. And I think it is making a difference for the first time.

QUESTION: I did have one little question, if I may.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Oh, you can have a question.

QUESTION: One of the objections -- our League is pushing for a study of immigration -- and one of the objections is that it causes racial and ethnic discrimination when we begin to make serious efforts against immigration. Could you give us some ideas about how to respond to that complaint?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Well, first of all, in terms of a commission on immigration, Barbara Jordan is -- her commission will be making a report shortly. And I think she has -- I have had occasion to meet with her, as

the chairman of that commission, and I think that they are doing some fine work.

I think that tension exists. We are all a nation -- almost all of us -- are a nation of immigrants. And it is a great tradition. This administration is committed to protecting that tradition, and doing it the right way by supporting legal immigration, while at the same time taking steps to end illegal immigration, but doing that in a manner that is consistent with due process and consistent with basic principles of human dignity.

That includes, for example, there are a great deal of tensions on the Southwest border, again, and we have tried to set up a citizens advisory panel that can advise and do outreach for the commissioner in terms of addressing these issues. And the whole issue of employer sanctions -- many people feel they are discriminated against because employers will not hire them because they are afraid of the sanctions, although they are perfectly legal.

These are a lot of the issues that we have to work through very carefully. What it is most going to require of all Americans is that they remember where they came from. And that when the pitch and the hysteria gets too high about immigration, people like the League step in and say, let's look at this the right way.

VOICE: Thank you.

Microphone three.

QUESTION: Thank you very much. My name is Virginia Agee. I represent the State of California, San Francisco League. And I am delighted with the fact that we are able to discuss the subject of immigration. I am a native San Franciscan, third generation of a family of five generations, so I am a descendant of the pioneers of California. And mine is to ask your recommendation or your position on proactive positions.

Like my previous speaker, there is that hysteria and paranoia going, and especially for people of color. If we are visible there is the assumption that we are just recent arrivals and that question of doubt of whether we are legal or illegal concerns me. And I would like to get your views of proactive, being at the positive end of prevention. And the comments you made about dignity is very important, and I would like to get your views on that and what could be done through the League.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think that the League can do much. It will depend to some extent on communities.

Let me give you an example of where I have seen community outreach and outreach on the part of the immigrant community. In Omaha, I visited with a group of

community activists who had been outraged at Immigration for coming in, picking up youngsters out of high school and deporting them back to Mexico. Their parents were here legally; the kids were not. I do not know all of the circumstances.

There was a terrible tension in the community, and it went both ways. This group started working with others in the area, and started doing outreach, explaining the legal processes, working with Immigration, working with other community groups in terms of providing translation at outreach programs held on Saturdays at the school gymnasium -- just getting people to start talking and working together.

Anything the League can do in terms of generating community understanding is imperative. And part of it is America has got to understand how its demographics are changing. I know from my own community, it is hard to say. It is going to take a different approach depending on different circumstances. But the more the community and groups like the League can do to reach out and say, whoa, we are a nation of immigrants. Let us prize that tradition. Let us work together to stem the tide of illegal immigrants. But let us, at the same time, treat all with respect and dignity.

And I think it extends beyond the issue of

illegal immigration. I think it extends -- the whole issue of hate crimes, the whole issue of bigotry is going to become a more difficult issue for this Nation, and it is going to require all of us to speak out against it.

(Applause.)

VOICE: Microphone six, way over here.

QUESTION: My name is Christine O'Sullivan, and I am from Westport. I am currently the President of the Westport League of Women Voters. I am also a former assistant prosecutor of Hudson County, New Jersey. And so I identified very strongly with your certainly being the first Attorney General, and my congratulations to you.

Of the problems of our country that seem to have exacerbated increasingly since I was in the prosecutor's office, I think that violence is our most important problem. I see in our League handouts and our directories and our workbooks for this session that there are seven or eight items that contain elements of violence, crisis in the cities, violence intervention and things like that.

Since you have learned that you have the power of the word, perhaps you might be in a position to suggest across the country that we establish a program, through the schools, of teaching the principles of nonviolence. Other countries do not suffer the way we do with street violence, crime, with an attitude of disrespect for one

another.

I think that there are methods to teach nonviolence. I think that dignity and tolerance for differences is important and part of those lessons. But if you were, as you did with respect to birth through three, stress the importance of young child care, also stressed the importance of early childhood education in the principles of nonviolence, I believe we would be well on our way to working towards another way of living.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: First, let me caution you, because you fall into a trap that I sometimes fall into when I think of violence as the greatest problem I deal with, because it is the greatest immediate problem. But violence, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, teen suicide, youth gangs, this youth violence that we see is a symptom of what I think is the greatest single problem that America has faced since World War II. And that is that for too often we have forgotten and neglected our children.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I have a little grandniece, two years old, and it has been good because I see her about every three months, so I can see the

a large number of trauma cases -- gunshot wounds, youth violence. And they went out with research dollars to the local surrounding schools to develop a conflict resolution program. And they are doing solid evaluations on it in conjunction with I think the University of Colorado.

So, there is a lot underway. And we are hopeful that more can be done to make it a fact of life in public schools throughout America.

(Applause.)

VOICE: I am afraid that this will need to be the last question. We will need to get the Attorney General back on her schedule. So, microphone two -- and I am sorry, it will be the last question.

QUESTION: Thank you. Eileen Nedelson of New York City and the New York City League.

I would like to revisit the question again on immigration, this time with a more specific note towards the home care and domestic workers. And I would like to hear your opinion on how you feel about the illegal status of these women, and whether or not you think the circumstances surrounding this issue has a disparate impact on single mothers and women on a career path.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think we need to all address that issue. I do not have any specifics for you on that particular point. But I think in terms of so much

of what we do, it goes back to making the law easily susceptible of compliance, so that people can understand how to do things without getting mixed up in a mesh of paperwork and other problems. And I think if we do that, we can address the need for appropriate child care.

I think, however, that the long-range issues of child care have got to be addressed in a far more comprehensive way, to make sure that we know the people who are caring for our children, that we train them correctly to care for our children at this very sensitive age, and that we address the problem of child care in a more comprehensive way than just considering this issue.

VOICE: Please join me in thanking the Attorney General.

(Standing ovation.)

(Whereupon, at 2:00 p.m., the Attorney General's speech concluded.)