

REMARKS BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
THE BIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF THE
FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE
AUGUST 2, 1995
VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

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INTRODUCTION

I AM HONORED TO BE HERE WITH YOU THIS MORNING DURING THE FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE'S BIENNIAL CONFERENCE.

ONE OF THE FIRST PEOPLE I MET WHEN I CAME TO WASHINGTON WAS DEWEY STOKES. YESTERDAY, THE PRESIDENT SIGNED A PRESIDENTIAL CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION TO HONOR DEWEY'S SERVICE ON BEHALF OF ALL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS. THE CERTIFICATE READS:

IN RECOGNITION OF HIS EXCEPTIONAL EFFORTS AS PRESIDENT OF THE FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE, TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS THROUGHOUT THE NATION, AND TO MAKE AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES STRONGER AND SAFER. WHETHER WORKING TO INCREASE BENEFITS OF THE SURVIVORS OF OFFICERS KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY, OR BATTLING TO PASS THE CRIME BILL, THE BRADY BILL, AND THE BANS ON PLASTIC GUNS, ASSAULT WEAPONS, AND COP-KILLER BULLETS, HE HAS SHOWN HIMSELF TO BE A TENACIOUS ADVOCATE FOR THE POLICE OFFICERS, AND THE CITIZENS OF THIS NATION. IN A PROUD CAREER, DEWEY STOKES HAS LIVED UP TO THE FINEST AMERICAN TRADITION OF SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP.

WE SALUTE YOU, DEWEY, AS YOU PASS ON THE MANTLE OF F.O.P. LEADERSHIP, AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH THE NEW F.O.P. LEADERSHIP IN THE FUTURE.

THIS IS THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY THAT I HAVE HAD TO ADDRESS THE FULL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE CONVENTION. BUT I FEEL AS THOUGH I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE, FOR A COUPLE OF REASONS.

FIRST OF ALL, I HAVE MET AND SEEN SO MANY OF YOU IN WASHINGTON, EITHER AT THE NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS' MEMORIAL CANDLELIGHT VIGIL, OR AT THE PEACE OFFICERS MEMORIAL SERVICE ON THE MALL SPONSORED BY THE F.O.P.

SECOND, I HAVE MET MANY OF YOU IN YOUR TOWNS, YOUR CITIES, AND YOUR COMMUNITIES, AS I HAVE TRAVELED THE COUNTRY DURING MY TENURE AS ATTORNEY GENERAL. IT IS WITH YOU, THE RANK AND FILE OFFICERS, THAT I HAVE WALKED YOUR PRECINCTS AND MET WITH YOU IN THE STATIONHOUSES, IN BOTH THE LARGEST CITIES AND THE SMALLEST TOWNS. I HAVE RIDDEN WITH POLICE WHO PUT THEIR LIVES ON THE LINE EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR AND TOO OFTEN GET SHOT AT, GET HURT, GET KILLED.

BUT THE EXPERIENCE OF TRAVELLING THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY HAS CONVINCED ME OF ONE THING, TIME AND AGAIN, YEAR AFTER YEAR. AMERICANS HAVE BEEN, ARE, AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE ABSOLUTELY OUTRAGED AT THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE IN OUR COUNTRY. THEY CONSIDER

IT THE FIRST PRIORITY OF ANY CRIMINAL JUSTICE EFFORT IN AMERICA. THEY WANT SOMETHING DONE. THEY WANT SOMETHING DONE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES, IN THEIR STATES, AND IN THIS NATION.

AND YOU, THE POLICE OFFICERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE LEADERS OF THE EFFORTS TO MAKE OUR STREETS SAFER. AMERICANS OF DECENCY AND GOOD WILL KNOW WHO YOU ARE, AND THEY SUPPORT YOU TO THE FULLEST. MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT THAT.

POLICE HAVE THE SINGLE HARDEST JOB OF ANYBODY IN THE COMMUNITY. YOU PUT YOUR LIVES ON THE LINE EACH DAY AS YOU CARRY YOUR BADGE. YOU HAVE TO MAKE LEGAL DECISIONS THAT WOULD STUMP SUPREME COURT JUSTICES. YOU HAVE TO MAKE LEGAL DECISIONS IN A CROWDED ALLEYWAY AT 2:00 IN THE MORNING WITHOUT THE LAW LIBRARY AT YOUR BACK, AND WITH NO MARGIN FOR ERROR. YOU HAVE THE TOUGHEST JOB IN THE COUNTRY BECAUSE YOU ARE THEN OFTEN SUBJECTED TO CRITICISM, WHEN YOU WERE DOING YOUR BEST AND DOING YOUR JOB.

SOME OF YOU MAY HAVE SEEN MY TESTIMONY YESTERDAY IN THE CONGRESSIONAL WACO HEARINGS. WHILE I AM GLAD THAT THE WACO MATTER CAN NOW BE PUT BEHIND US, I AM GRATEFUL TO HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC JUST HOW DIFFICULT THE DECISIONS ARE THAT WE MUST MAKE.

THE EVIDENCE IS CLEAR. BRAVE AND TIRELESS -- AND PATIENT -- LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL MADE EVERY EFFORT TO RESOLVE THAT

CONFLICT PEACEFULLY. WHEN THEY COULD NOT, THEY CHOSE THE LEAST DANGEROUS METHOD KNOWN TO LAW ENFORCEMENT TO TRY TO MOVE THE SITUATION OFF DEAD CENTER.

IN THE END, ANY CHANCE OF SUCCESS WAS SNATCHED FROM THEM BY THE ACTIONS OF DAVID KORESH. LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL RISKED THEIR LIVES TO RESCUE THOSE THEY COULD. NO DOUBT SHOULD REMAIN THAT LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENTS MADE AN HONEST EFFORT, AND THAT THIS EVENT BEGAN WITH THE MURDER OF FOUR GOVERNMENT AGENTS, AND ENDED WITH THE SELF-INFLICTED DEATH OF DAVID KORESH AND HIS FOLLOWERS INSIDE THE COMPOUND.

WHILE WACO WAS AN UNPRECEDENTED OCCURRENCE, IT REMINDS US THAT DAY IN AND DAY OUT LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS IN THIS COUNTRY DO AN INCREDIBLE JOB IN THE FACE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS CIRCUMSTANCES.

I KNOW WELL THE INCREDIBLE JOBS YOU DO, FOR I HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH POLICING FOR A LONG TIME. MY FATHER WAS A POLICE REPORTER FOR THE MIAMI HERALD FOR 43 YEARS. HE KEPT HIS OFFICE AT THE MIAMI POLICE DEPARTMENT, AND NOT AT THE NEWSPAPER. MY EARLIEST MEMORIES ARE OF GOING TO WORK WITH HIM AND SITTING ALL DAY TALKING TO EVERYBODY, FROM THE CHIEF TO THE PATROLMAN WHO HAD JUST JOINED THE DEPARTMENT. I CAME TO UNDERSTAND THEN THE DIFFICULTIES, THE CHALLENGES, AND THE REWARDS OF POLICE WORK.

MY FIRST JOB GROWING UP WAS IN THE DADE COUNTY SHERIFFS' OFFICE BACK IN FLORIDA. IT WAS A LITTLE OFFICE THEN, IN MANY WAYS FAR REMOVED FROM THE TREMENDOUS CHALLENGES THAT LAW ENFORCEMENT FACES TODAY.

AS STATE'S ATTORNEY IN DADE COUNTY FOR 15 YEARS, I CONTINUALLY LEARNED FROM THE POLICE OFFICERS WITH WHOM I MADE CASES TO PUT CRIMINALS IN PRISON. EVERY DAY, UP CLOSE, I SAW THE DEDICATION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS, MANIFESTED IN THE COURAGE IT TAKES TO RAID A CRACK HOUSE AT MIDNIGHT, AND THE TENDERNESS IT TAKES TO SERVE AS MENTORS FOR CHILDREN STRUGGLING TO MAKE SOMETHING OF THEIR LIVES, AND REJECT THE CRIME AND DRUGS THAT THREATENS THEIR SUCCESS.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO FACE THESE CHALLENGES TOGETHER. AS I HAVE SAID MANY TIMES, I HAVE ENJOYED TALKING WITH ALL OF YOU, HEARING YOUR CONCERNS, AND RETURNING TO WASHINGTON TO WORK WITH THE F.O.P. ON IMPORTANT ISSUES, TO UTILIZE ASSET FORFEITURE LAWS AGGRESSIVELY BUT FAIRLY, BAN ARMOR PIERCING AMMUNITION, AND ENACT AN EXEMPTION TO THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT FOR PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS.

THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND THE FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE SUPPORTS THE FUNDAMENTAL GOAL OF THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION--A PARTNERSHIP WITH STATE AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT.

OUR PARTNERSHIP STARTS WITH AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT ROLE LOCAL POLICE OFFICERS PLAY IN OUR COMMUNITIES, AND HOW THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN ASSIST.

WE DON'T SERVE YOU WELL IF WE RUSH TO FEDERALIZE CRIMES THAT HAVE BEEN HISTORICALLY AND TRADITIONALLY PROSECUTED ON THE LOCAL LEVEL. NOTHING WAS MORE FRUSTRATING TO ME AS A COUNTY PROSECUTOR THAN WHEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WOULD COME IN AND TAKE OVER A CASE THAT LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AND PROSECUTORS HAD SPENT MONTHS WORKING ON. OUR GOAL IS TO HAVE FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT SUPPORT YOUR EFFORTS, AND WORK TOGETHER.

THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION'S COMMITMENT HAS BEEN TO DIRECT RESOURCES AT UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS TO STATES AND LOCALITIES. WE HAVE DEDICATED OUR RESOURCES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, WHERE OVER 95% OF THE CRIMINALS ARE ARRESTED, PROSECUTED, AND SERVE THEIR TIME.

WE HAVE REMEMBERED THAT THE NEEDS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT MAY DIFFER FROM URBAN AREAS TO RURAL AREAS, AND HAVE REACTED ACCORDINGLY. MOST OF YOU SERVE COMMUNITIES WITH FAR FEWER THAN 100,000 PEOPLE. WE SHOULD DO EVERYTHING TO ENSURE THAT YOUR COMMUNITIES ARE EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH A BURGEONING CRIME PROBLEM.

THAT'S ONE OF THE REASONS WHY WE'VE DIRECTED SO MANY OF THE COPS GRANTS TO SMALLER COMMUNITIES. YOU KNOW THE BIG DIFFERENCE

A FEW PATROLMAN OR DEPUTY SHERIFFS CAN MAKE IN A SMALL TOWN. WE WILL CONTINUE TO ENSURE THAT RURAL INTERESTS ARE NOT FORGOTTEN WHEN NATIONAL POLICY IS MADE IN WASHINGTON.

OUR PARTNERSHIP CONTINUES WITH AN UNDERSTANDING THAT YOU WANT, AND NEED, LESS BUREAUCRACY WHEN YOU APPLY FOR THE GRANTS AND AID THAT WASHINGTON SUPPLIES.

THE COMPLEXITY OF THE FORMS, AND THE PAPERWORK REQUIRED TO GET DESPERATELY NEEDED GRANT MONEY ALWAYS LEFT ME DISMAYED WHEN I WAS STATE'S ATTORNEY.

THAT'S WHY WE CUT RED TAPE DRAMATICALLY FOR THE VARIOUS COPS PROGRAMS. THE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS OF THE PROGRAM ARE LESS THAN 2% OF THE FUNDS, A TRULY OUTSTANDING FIGURE.

THE CRIME BILL

MUCH OF OUR ABILITY TO DIRECT RESOURCES TO WHERE THEY WERE SO DESPERATELY NEEDED STEMS FROM THE PASSAGE OF THE 1994 VIOLENT CRIME CONTROL ACT, SIGNED IN SEPTEMBER 1994 BY PRESIDENT CLINTON. THE CRIME BILL OFFERED A TOUGH, TARGETED APPROACH TO FIGHTING CRIME IN OUR COMMUNITIES. THE FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE WAS A LEADER IN THAT FIGHT.

TOGETHER, WE WON TOUGH ENFORCEMENT, MORE PRISONS TO HOUSE CRIMINALS, AND SMART, DIRECTED PREVENTION FUNDS. THE CRIME BILL

OUTLAWED DANGEROUS ASSAULT WEAPONS AND PROVIDED FUNDS TO CONTINUE TO IMPLEMENT THE BRADY BILL, WHICH PREVENTED 41,000 GUNS FROM REACHING THE HANDS OF FELONS IN THE FIRST YEAR ALONE. WE CANNOT AFFORD TO TURN BACK ON ANY OF THIS PROGRESS.

AT EVERY STEP ALONG THE WAY, FROM DRAFTING, TO PASSAGE, TO IMPLEMENTATION, IN NO SMALL PART DUE TO YOUR HARD WORK, A STRONG, EFFECTIVE CRIME LAW IS IN PLACE. THE CRIME BILL WAS NOT A CREATION OF WASHINGTON. INSTEAD, IT WAS FORGED THROUGH SPENDING THOUSANDS OF HOURS WITH PEOPLE LIKE YOU. WE TRAVELED ACROSS THE COUNTRY LISTENING TO MAYORS, POLICE CHIEFS, AND RANK AND FILE OFFICERS TELL US WHAT HELP WE COULD PROVIDE TO MAKE THEIR CITIES AND TOWNS BETTER PLACES TO LIVE. NOW, AS THE PROGRAMS WE CREATED TOGETHER, COME UNDER ATTACK, WE NEED THE F.O.P. TO CONTINUE TO BE LEADERS IN THE FIGHT TO PRESERVE THE CRIME BILL.

POLICE

WE WILL ACCOMPLISH PRESIDENT CLINTON'S HISTORIC PLEDGE TO PUT 100,000 NEW POLICE ON THE STREETS OF AMERICA, AND WE WILL DO IT IN RECORD TIME.

I RECENTLY WAS REMINDED OF A SPEECH THAT I GAVE AT THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB FIVE DAYS BEFORE THE CRIME BILL WAS SIGNED INTO LAW BY PRESIDENT CLINTON. IN THAT SPEECH I OUTLINED OUR

PRIORITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE LAW AND MOVE FORWARD TO PUT MORE POLICE ON THE STREETS TO MAKE OUR COMMUNITIES SAFER.

AT THAT TIME IN EARLY SEPTEMBER OF 1994, I INDICATED THAT OUR GOAL WAS TO ADD AN ADDITIONAL 20,000 POLICE OFFICERS BY JANUARY OF 1996. IT WAS AN AMBITIOUS GOAL BY EVERY ESTIMATE. YET WE HAVE EXCEEDED THIS GOAL BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS.

JUST LAST WEEK, WE ANNOUNCED ANOTHER ROUND OF COPS AWARDS, GRANTS THAT WILL PUT A TOTAL OF 23,907 OFFICERS ON THE STREETS.

COPS AHEAD AND COPS FAST WERE TWO PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO EXPEDITE THE REQUESTS OF LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT TO PUT MORE COPS ON THE STREET. COPS AHEAD DIRECTED ALMOST 4400 POLICE OFFICERS TO CITIES WITH 50,000 OR MORE PEOPLE. COPS FAST, FUNDED MORE THAN 7,000 OFFICERS TO CITIES AND TOWNS WITH LESS THAN 50,000 PEOPLE. LESS TIME WAS SPENT ON COMPLETING PAPERWORK SO THAT THE RESOURCES WERE DIRECTED TO YOU QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY.

I HAVE ATTENDED MANY OF THE CEREMONIES AS THE OFFICERS FUNDED UNDER THE VARIOUS COPS PROGRAMS GRADUATE FROM THE ACADEMY TO BEGIN LIVES OF SERVICE AS POLICE OFFICERS. FROM THE NATION'S SMALLEST TOWNS TO ITS LARGEST CITIES, WE HAVE PLACED MORE COPS ON THE STREET PRACTICING COMMUNITY POLICING, AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO DO THIS IN A PROMPT, PROFESSIONAL, NON-PARTISAN, NON-BUREAUCRATIC MANNER.

THREATS AND CRITICISMS

IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT SOME IN CONGRESS SAID WE WOULD NEVER PUT 20,000 POLICE OFFICERS ON THE STREETS, LET ALONE 100,000. THEY SAID WE WOULD HIRE SOCIAL WORKERS INSTEAD. WELL, THE CRITICS WERE WRONG BEFORE THE CRIME BILL WAS SIGNED, THEY WERE WRONG WHEN WE BEGAN TO IMPLEMENT THE CRIME BILL, AND THEY CONTINUE TO BE WRONG NOW.

BUT THE ATTACKS CONTINUE ON THE COPS PROGRAM, ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL, NON-BUREAUCRATIC PROGRAMS IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S HISTORY. JUST LAST WEEK, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PASSED AN APPROPRIATIONS BILL WHICH WOULD ELIMINATE THE COPS PROGRAM AND WOULD REPLACE IT WITH A BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM. THE SENATE SOON WILL ALSO CONSIDER LEGISLATION THAT ATTEMPTS TO GUT THE COPS PROGRAM.

I REMEMBER WHEN I WAS STATE'S ATTORNEY IN DADE COUNTY AND I'D HEAR REPORTS THAT A WONDERFUL BILL WAS PASSED IN WASHINGTON THAT AUTHORIZES NEW SUPPORT FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT. SIX MONTHS LATER, I'D ASK MY SENATOR WHEN THAT SUPPORT WOULD GET DOWN TO THE LOCAL LEVEL WHERE IT WAS NEEDED. SOMETIMES HE WOULD ANSWER THAT THE MONEY HAD BEEN AUTHORIZED BUT NOT APPROPRIATED. OTHER TIMES I KNEW THAT THE MONEY WAS FILTERING DOWN FROM WASHINGTON TO ATLANTA TO TALLAHASSEE TO DADE COUNTY. EVERY TIME THAT MONEY CHANGED HANDS ALONG THE WAY, THERE WAS LESS OF IT TO REACH THE LOCAL LEVEL WHERE IT WOULD DO THE MOST GOOD.

BUT THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION'S APPROACH IS NEW AND DIFFERENT. IT FOCUSES RESOURCES DIRECTLY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL--NO MIDDLEMAN, NO HUGE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS DILUTING THE STRENGTH OF THE PROGRAM. WE MADE A PROMISE AND WE ARE KEEPING IT. WE ARE STEERING APPROPRIATED FUNDS DIRECTLY TO YOU AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.

WE NEED THE HELP OF THE FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE TO ENSURE THAT CONGRESS DOES NOT TURN ITS BACK ON THE COMMITMENT MADE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WITH THE PASSAGE OF THE VIOLENT CRIME CONTROL ACT LAST FALL.

VARIOUS LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS NOW BEFORE CONGRESS RETREAT FROM THE PROGRESS WE HAVE MADE TOGETHER WITH THE 1994 VIOLENT CRIME CONTROL ACT IN ONE OF TWO WAYS. THESE PROPOSALS EITHER DANGLE THE CARROT OF LARGER AUTHORIZATIONS THAT MAY NOT BE FUNDED, OR THEY CREATE BLOCK GRANTS, DIVERTING MONEY FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT AS IT CHANGES HANDS ALONG THE LINE.

CONCLUSION

WE MUST CONTINUE THE WORK THAT WE HAVE BEGUN TOGETHER TO CREATE PROGRAMS TO SECURE THE SAFETY OF ALL CITIZENS. WE MUST NOT BE DETERRED BY ATTACKS UPON THE LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSION. YOU ARE DOING INCREDIBLE JOBS IN SMALL DEPARTMENTS, LARGE DEPARTMENTS, RURAL AREAS, URBAN AREAS BY RECOGNIZING WHAT POLICING IS ALL ABOUT. YOU ARE ON THE STREETS GIVING CHILDREN HOPE BY PREVENTING VIOLENCE AND RESTORING ORDER. YOU ARE ON THE

STREETS BEING FAIR AND FIRM. TOGETHER, WE ARE FORGING
RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR COMMUNITIES.

I WANT YOU TO KNOW YOU HAVE MY GRATITUDE, FOR THE DAY TO DAY
BURDENS OF YOUR WORK, AND THE HEROISM YOU DEMONSTRATE SO
FREQUENTLY WITHOUT ANY NOTICE FROM ANYBODY ELSE. IT IS FOR THIS
REASON, ABOVE ALL, WHY I AM PROUD TO BE INVOLVED WITH YOU, IN LAW
ENFORCEMENT.