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5 U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET F. RENO
6 SPEAKING BEFORE
7 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TOWN AND TOWNSHIPS
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10
11 Wednesday, September 4, 1996
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16 Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill
17 400 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
18 Washington, D.C.
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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you
3 very much.

4 It is a special privilege for me to
5 be here with you today, because, as I was
6 growing up, as a small child, I lived in a town
7 called South Miami, about 20 miles down FEC
8 railroad tracks from Miami. It was a different
9 world.

10 We rode the ponies down to the
11 market. During gas-rationing, we could
12 substitute the pony and the buggy for the car.
13 And I still see, on the side of the road, the
14 path that my pony helped to forge.

15 When I came to Washington, this clerk
16 of the little town was still writing me notes,
17 encouraging me.

18 People that I had known all my life,

19 who are now scattered to other parts of the
20 country, were supporting me.

21 And all of that framework had arisen
22 in that little town of South Miami.

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1 It has gotten a little fancier now.
2 And as I drive there when I go home, I think of
3 how times have changed.

4 But, then, I drive past my elementary
5 school, my junior high school, all really a
6 part of that town, and I know that it will
7 always be with me.

8 I came to Washington having
9 represented a large jurisdiction, but
10 remembering that town of South Miami.

11 And I have been committed to making
12 sure that the Department of Justice does not
13 forget the small towns, the townships, the more
14 rural areas of America, because the problems
15 are just as great there, when you consider
16 their magnitude in relation to everything
17 that's happening in the community.

18 And so, I have said, as we look at
19 grants, as we look at action, let us make sure
20 that we represent and work with all America,
21 not just the big urban cities.

22 (Applause)

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1 One of the points that most
2 immediately struck me, after I came into office
3 and started looking at nationwide trends, was
4 that we might well have an impact in urban
5 cities, because resources had been placed
6 there, commitments had been made.

7 But as I looked at what was
8 happening, we were achieving success in the
9 urban areas, and we were pushing the bad guys
10 either into prison or out into the more rural
11 areas.

12 And as I worked with others to
13 recommend to the President the nomination of
14 U.S. attorneys and talked to potential
15 candidates, I said: "As Attorney General, I

16 want you to work with all of your district, not
17 just the big city in the district. But I want
18 us to develop a district-wide plan that covers
19 the entire area, to make sure that the bad guys
20 don't feel like they have a safe haven because
21 they think that people will ignore them -- law
22 enforcement will ignore them in the smaller

5
1 towns."

2 In our whole anti-violence
3 initiative, it has been: How can we form a
4 partnership with state and local law
5 enforcement? How can we form a partnership
6 with that sheriff in that small county or the
7 police chief in a small town that may have one
8 or two policemen at the most?

9 Our whole effort has been to
10 recognize that you understand your needs and
11 resources better than we do in Washington.

12 I never liked it when the feds came
13 to town in Miami and said, "Now, this is what
14 we want from you. And we know better what you
15 need. And this is what you should be doing."

16 I often wished that they'd come and
17 say, "Now, just what are your needs? And what
18 are the problems here? And how can we help
19 you?"

20 And that's what I want to try to do
21 with all the jurisdictions across this country.

22 It also troubled me when I got

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1 federal grant applications. I thought: I went
2 to Harvard Law School, and I don't know how to
3 fill out these applications.

4 (Laughter and applause)

5 Then I look at the various agencies
6 competing for grants, and the smart ones were
7 the ones that went and got grant writers.

8 And I thought, we're supposed to be
9 representing all of the people. You shouldn't
10 have to have professional grant writers be the
11 key to your success in securing a federal
12 grant.

13 So, as we worked together, for
14 example, on the COPS Program, I wanted to make
15 sure that our systems and our processes were as
16 open and as accessible -- as easily accessible
17 as possible, and that you didn't need a degree
18 in grantsmanship to be successful.

19 I think we have seen some results.
20 When the 1994 Crime Act authorized funding of a
21 100,000 community police officers, we wanted to
22 make sure that the Nation's smaller communities
7
1 had realistic opportunities to participate in
2 this wonderful initiative.

3 And I got a great deal of skepticism.
4 People would say, "I know you say you're going
5 to make sure that small towns and small cities
6 are represented, but I've heard that before."

7 But that is why half of all the COPS
8 grant funding was dedicated to law enforcement
9 agencies serving towns of 150,000 and smaller.

10 In addition, we developed COPS FAST,
11 which is Funding Accelerated for Smaller Towns.
12 Under this initiative, expedited grant
13 procedures were available for law enforcement
14 agencies serving towns with fewer than 50,000
15 residents.

16 Under COPS FAST, remembering my
17 frustration with grants, the Department made
18 available a one-page, fill-in-the-blank form,
19 which dramatically simplified the task of
20 applying for funding.

21 I understand that in many of the
22 communities we represent, the local officials

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1 serve sometimes on a part-time basis and that
2 they consider this application one of the most
3 sensible forms they've ever gotten from
4 Washington, because it's something that can be
5 filled out, that's straightforward, and that
6 makes sense.

7 The response has been tremendous.
8 When I visit small towns, either in person or
9 by telephone, it is really rewarding to have

10 mayors and chiefs of police say, "This makes
11 sense."

12 We developed an 800-number so that
13 people could call in and get their questions
14 answered.

15 I took some of the calls, and it was
16 wonderful to have people say, "It's so nice to
17 have somebody on the other end of the line that
18 can answer the question in a straightforward
19 sort of way and tell you just what to expect."

20 We really try to make sure that we
21 are responsive to the small towns, to the
22 groups across this Nation that have a sense of

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1 community and should never, ever be left out.

2 The impact of community policing has
3 been wonderful: To have that police chief tell
4 me, "You gave me one officer, just one officer,
5 but it has made all the difference." To have
6 citizens tell me the same thing.

7 And what I would appreciate from you
8 is not just the praise, but what we can do to
9 be more responsive, to be more effective, and
10 to really meet the needs of towns across this
11 Nation.

12 One of the areas of concern that is
13 most important to me is the problem of family
14 violence.

15 Long ago, as a prosecutor in Miami,
16 when I first took office, I sent an intern to
17 the medical examiner's office to find out why
18 people had been killed in Dade County for the
19 previous 20 years.

20 Forty percent of all homicides where
21 the assailant had been identified were related
22 to domestic violence. And we developed a

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1 domestic intervention program that became one
2 of the models in the country.

3 It has taken a long time to get
4 judges and police officers and even the medical
5 community on board in recognizing domestic
6 violence as one of the great issues that we

7 face. But it is so true. And it is everywhere
8 in this country.

9 In Iowa I was on a 15-town and city
10 hookup. They have an interactive hookup that's
11 quite something, and I've been on it twice now.
12 And on each occasion, from the small towns,
13 comes the same word as from the large cities:
14 Domestic violence is probably one of our major
15 crime problems.

16 And so, with the passage of the Crime
17 Act, we focused on distributing monies
18 through the Violence Against Women Act.
19 Significant monies would go to states across
20 the Nation, to be distributed throughout
21 communities. And again, we wanted to make sure
22 that the smaller towns were not neglected.

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1 Why is it so important? I look at it
2 this way. Violence is a learned behavior. The
3 child who watches his father beat his mother
4 comes to accept violence as a way of life.
5 Unless we eliminate violence in the home, we
6 are never going to eliminate it in the streets
7 and in the schools of America.

8 And it is important that the smaller
9 communities have equal access to those monies.
10 Thus, it is a requirement of our grants
11 program, both the STOP Program, which is the
12 major state program, and others, that
13 previously underserved populations, be served
14 as part of the overall state planning effort.

15 We will be announcing, probably by
16 the end of this month, some rural grants to,
17 again, address the issue of domestic violence.

18 As an example of how these monies are
19 being used, Iowa used some of its STOP money to
20 hire three advocates to serve domestic violence
21 victims in 11 rural counties that had never had
22 advocates before.

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1 Fifty-nine percent of the COPS money
2 focused on domestic violence has gone to
3 communities under 150,000, a total of a little

4 over \$27 million.

5 So it is important that we continue
6 to focus in every way that we possibly can.

7 But one of the problems continues to
8 exist. There may be shelters for battered
9 spouses in the major urban areas. It may be 50
10 miles away. But in a small town 50 miles
11 across the state, there will be no shelter, the
12 victims won't want to leave, they will be
13 afraid, they won't know where to go or what to
14 do.

15 We've got to develop transportation
16 systems and mechanisms that make sure that
17 victims across America are served regardless of
18 where they are.

19 The same would apply, for example, in
20 child abuse investigations.

21 I was fortunate as a prosecutor to
22 have a great urban public hospital right at my

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1 back door, so that when a child came in with an
2 injury of unknown origin and someone said,
3 "Well, he fell out of bed," I had the best
4 pediatric forensic specialist who could say,
5 "That break was not caused by falling out of
6 bed. That break was caused by a sharp blow
7 with a blunt object."

8 It is so difficult if you're 100
9 miles away or 150 miles away from that type of
10 expertise. And we would like to work with you
11 in developing better mechanisms through
12 tele-medicine and other means of using modern
13 technology to make sure that that expertise is
14 brought to the more -- the smaller areas across
15 America.

16 If we work together, if we have the
17 benefit of your suggestions, if we understand
18 your needs and resources better, it can make a
19 difference.

20 And, thus, I would ask you, don't
21 just sit there and fume at Washington and say,
22 "Hmm, they're not listening."

14

1 Here's somebody that's listening.
2 And if you have suggestions about the
3 Department of Justice can do to be more
4 responsive, let me know.

5 It's Department of Justice, 10th and
6 Constitution, 20530.

7 You say, "I don't think you really
8 get all your mail."

9 I don't get all my mail. But I'm
10 very -- I try very hard to make sure that I
11 hear from community leaders across this Nation,
12 wherever they are; remembering that you know
13 your needs and resources better than I do, and
14 I need to support you in every way that I can.

15 (Applause)

16 I remember that little town of South
17 Miami -- how the teachers related to the gas
18 station man and how everybody related to Coach
19 Turiffio (phonetic), our coach who everybody
20 loved; how it was truly a community.

21 And I have been committed to doing
22 everything I can to use the Department of

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1 Justice in the right way to help rebuild
2 community; and to help, in instances where
3 children and families are at risk, to reweave
4 the fabric of community around those at risk.

5 I recently heard from Dyersburg,
6 Tennessee. I hadn't yet known that I was
7 coming here. And when I got the news that I
8 would be here, I thought: I'm glad to be able
9 to report on something that we're doing right
10 and hopefully suggest that it might serve as a
11 model.

12 Dyersburg, Tennessee, is a town of
13 about 40,000, located in the south central part
14 of the state.

15 Three years ago, the Dyersburg Police
16 Department began an aggressive
17 community-oriented policing strategy to address
18 high-crime activity in and around the city
19 public housing area. Gang activity was a
20 particular problem.

21 As a result of that strategy, calls
22 for services were ultimately reduced, and

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1 pedestrians felt free to walk in areas that had
2 previously been the scenes of gun violence.

3 But according to the Dyersburg Police
4 Department, the police did not achieve the
5 results on their own. They did it in
6 partnership with the whole community, working
7 together through a community-oriented police
8 steering committee that is made up of citizens
9 of Dyersburg.

10 Spurred by their success in community
11 policing, Dyersburg leaders decided to seek a
12 Department of Justice designation as an
13 officially recognized Weed and Seed site.

14 As many of you know, Operation Weed
15 and Seed is a key Department of Justice
16 community-based public safety effort. The
17 Republicans started it, the Democrats have
18 carried it on. It's a good bipartisan program
19 and shows you that we should be fighting crime
20 not with partisan politics, but with common
21 sense of people working together.

22 (Applause)

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1 Weed and Seed is neighborhood-focused
2 and seeks to address public safety issues in a
3 balanced way that includes appropriately
4 aggressive crime suppression efforts that are
5 anchored in community policing. But it also
6 includes the development of crime prevention
7 activities that can positively engage youth in
8 their after-school hours. And it focuses on
9 building economically viable and healthy
10 communities.

11 Dyersburg was designated as an
12 officially recognized Weed and Seed site
13 earlier this year. And the people of that
14 community have continued to do wonderful things
15 with that designation.

16 A police substation has been opened
17 in each of the two Weed and Seed neighborhoods.

18 When gang members burned down one of the sites
19 while it was under construction, the community
20 banded together to rebuild it.

21 Other important efforts are also
22 under way as part of this project.

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1 Weed and Seed in Dyersburg is working
2 closely with the city's Habitat for Humanity
3 affiliate to build new homes in one of the Weed
4 and Seed neighborhoods.

5 Weed and Seed leaders are working
6 with church leaders and educators to make GED
7 courses available for neighborhood residents.
8 And they are using the substation as the place
9 to get the training.

10 The Weed and Seed also serves as the
11 focal through which children and youth programs
12 are coordinated -- such as, for example,
13 something as simple as taking the children not
14 too far away to the zoo in Memphis, something
15 that kids in that area might not otherwise ever
16 have the opportunity to do.

17 There is so much that we can do if we
18 work together.

19 Large cities such as Boston are
20 finding the same to be true. And we're going
21 to be putting out a booklet shortly, just
22 analyzing what one city can do when it starts

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1 identifying what it can do if it brings schools
2 and parks and recreation and police and the
3 churches and interested citizens and neighbors
4 together in one coordinated effort.

5 If we get coordinated, what should we
6 be trying to do?

7 I think raising children is the
8 single most difficult thing I know to do. In
9 1984, a friend died leaving me as the legal
10 guardian of her 15-year-old twins, a boy and a
11 girl. The girl was in love. And I've learned
12 an awful lot about raising children in the last
13 12 years.

14 (Laughter)

15 It takes hard work, intelligence, a
16 lot of love, and an awful lot of luck. But it
17 is one of the most rewarding experiences in the
18 world.

19 And I've applied some of the
20 knowledge I've gained. If you're firm and fair
21 and let them know you love them, it's going to
22 be okay. If you're not firm and give a little

20
1 bit, they're going to take a mile.

2 If they don't know that you love them
3 after you've punished them, they're going to be
4 angrier.

5 And we should be about raising our
6 children in the same way, to deal with the
7 problem of youth violence, which has been one
8 of the major issues of this country in the last
9 10 years.

10 We should make sure that we have
11 strong and able parents. Developing parenting
12 skills courses in schools might be one way to
13 do it, or working with churches to do the same.

14 Those first three years of life are
15 the most formative time in a child's or a
16 person's life. That's when the concept of
17 reward and punishment and a conscience is
18 developed.

19 Fifty percent of all learned human
20 response is learned in the first year of life.

21 Communities bannng together to make
22 sure that our children have appropriate child

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1 care can make such a difference.

2 But even in our towns, there are too
3 many children adrift, alone, and unsupervised
4 in the hours -- afternoons -- after school,
5 oftentimes in the evening, as parents are
6 struggling to work to make ends meet.

7 We've got to make sure that we
8 coordinate our communities and utilize our
9 resources to provide a fabric of support for
10 our children, to make sure they have good solid
11 "educare," that they come to schools that are

12 pretty wonderful.

13 I remember the names of all my
14 teachers, and it is so wonderful when I get a
15 note from one of them that says, "Attagirl,
16 Janet."

17 I can still remember them encouraging
18 me along the way. Now their daughters and
19 granddaughters are all becoming doctors and
20 lawyers. I think it's high time we remind the
21 world of how important our teachers are.

22 There is something wrong with the

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1 Nation that pays its football players in the
2 six-digit figures and pays its school teachers
3 what we pay them.

4 (Applause)

5 But if we have the best schools in
6 the world and support from citizens and from
7 parents, we have got to, then, make sure that
8 there's something for our children to do
9 afternoons and in the evenings. And it is
10 exciting to see what communities are doing to
11 develop volunteer programs.

12 I just got a clipping from my
13 hometown newspaper about police officers who
14 were taking kids at risk under their wing and
15 providing opportunities for them on weekends
16 and afternoons. Each one of us can make a
17 difference.

18 I am convinced that if we provide a
19 mentor for a young man or woman at risk with
20 whom they can relate, we can make a difference,
21 a mentor who can ensure supervision and
22 somebody to talk to and a pat on the back when

23
1 it's deserved.

2 If we teach our young people how to
3 resolve conflicts without knives and guns and
4 fists, we can make a difference.

5 I have been participating, as part of
6 a pro bono program, in a citizens dispute in a
7 school dispute settlement program where
8 teachers are learning how to settle disputes

9 amongst kids.

10 It is so exciting to see how this can
11 be a learned skill, how the light bulb just
12 goes on in a person's face when they say, "Oh,
13 I hadn't thought of that. Yeah, I could try
14 that, and I bet I could have resolved that
15 problem."

16 Truancy prevention is such an
17 important effort. For that police officer in
18 your town who picks up the kid, what's he going
19 to do with him if the parents are working? How
20 do we work together?

21 We have tried to reach out to the
22 Department of Education, the Department of

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1 Health and Human Services, and, in a
2 partnership between the three agencies, provide
3 an information system that can let you know
4 what to do and who to call to find out about
5 truancy prevention programs, mentoring
6 programs, conflict resolution programs.

7 The number is 202-307-5911 --
8 202-307-5911. They might have other
9 information that can help you, too. And if we
10 back up -- I told them that giving out the
11 phone number, I would make sure that we tried
12 to be as responsive as possible.

13 If we are not responsive, I want to
14 know about it.

15 Because I am firmly convinced that if
16 we look at this not as a bureaucracy, not as
17 just a series of programs, but people working
18 with people across this Nation, with us
19 providing you with whatever expertise we have,
20 and you putting it to good use in the community
21 you know, we can truly, truly make a
22 difference.

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1 I have been Attorney General for a
2 little over three and a half years. It has
3 been one of the most extraordinary challenges
4 that anybody could have and one of the most
5 wonderful opportunities to serve this Nation.

6 I have visited small towns, and I've
7 walked down the streets of huge cities. I've
8 seen America at its very best. And I've seen
9 America in its most trying times.

10 I have never, ever believed so deeply
11 in this Nation's ability to forge a strong and
12 positive future for our children.

13 I think it was best seen in Oklahoma
14 City following the tragedy of April the 19th,
15 1995. I went there with the President the
16 Sunday after and watched the people of Oklahoma
17 City come together with people from around the
18 Nation who had come to help.

19 They came together to speak out
20 against the violence that had spawned that
21 blast from hell. They came together to help
22 survivors and victims begin to heal. They came

26
1 together to support law enforcement every step
2 of the way, in its effort to hold people
3 accountable the right way. And it came
4 together to speak out for this Nation.

5 I've gone back to Oklahoma City
6 twice, and the spirit is still as strong.

7 Victims and survivors have come to
8 visit me in the Department of Justice, and
9 their spirit is still as strong.

10 That spirit that I have seen so
11 consistently in Oklahoma and around this
12 Nation, as I have talked to people who went to
13 help out there, is the spirit that made this
14 Nation great.

15 It is a spirit reflective of towns
16 and cities, of farms and suburban areas. It is
17 a spirit of people who care and can reach out
18 to join together to give this nation a strong
19 and positive tomorrow.

20 Thank you for all that you do to make
21 a difference.

22 (Applause)

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1 (Whereupon, the speech of
2 ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET F. RENO

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