

Finally, we take very seriously the responsibility of the federal government to work with local officials in the area of civil rights enforcement. We have asked our U.S. Attorneys to be particularly attentive to cases involving violations based upon religious and racial hatred.

Next, I would like to highlight two additional areas where the Department of Justice's work may be of value to you.

According to a recent National Institute of Justice study, criminal justice leaders agree that prison and jail overcrowding is the most important problem facing them. It is a problem which dates to colonial times.

Since, 1953, the number of people sentenced to prison has increased 135 percent, but our prison facilities increased only 71 percent during the same period.

Consequently, our jail and prison facilities are crammed. The result is that too often a prisoner is brought in the front door, only to be let out the back by the courts.

This is a tragedy. Studies tell us that incapacitation of the criminal is one of our best crime prevention tools. Indeed, a recent Bureau of Justice Statistics study showed that more than four-fifths of offenders entering prison have a record of prior convictions. More than three-fifths have served time. And more than two-fifths were on probation or parole.

Finally, for the last three years we have had a decrease in the crime rate in this country. This is not attributable simply to a decrease in the size of the crime-prone age groups, as some would have you believe. Rather, good law enforcement management and use of limited resources, more frequent imposition of sentences by judges, and longer terms of incarceration for career criminals have undoubtedly contributed to that decrease. And finally, the involvement of the citizen through community programs, crime prevention programs, and neighborhood watch programs can make a tremendous difference in crime control and prevention.

Let me assure you, in closing, that the Department of Justice is fully committed to a policy of openness and cooperation in its relations with the agencies of state and local government. The founders of this Republic would have expected no less from the servants of a federal sovereign, intended to complement rather than dominate the several states.

Thank you.

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