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**National Crime Victims' Rights Week – a time to expand the reach.**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the misuse of and addiction to opioids, including prescription pain relievers, heroin, and synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, claim the lives of more than 116 Americans each day, over 42,000 Americans each year.<sup>1</sup> The National Institute on Drug Abuse has estimated that about 80% of people who use heroin, first misused prescription opioids.<sup>2</sup>

Violent drug gangs and other criminal enterprises operating in our region continue to plague our communities. In 2016, the latest data available, more than 5.7 million people were victims of violent crime across the nation.<sup>3</sup> Last year, there were 157 murders in New Orleans alone.<sup>4</sup>

The Government Accountability Office has reported that financial fraud targeting older Americans is a growing epidemic that costs seniors an estimated \$2.9 billion annually.<sup>5</sup> On February 22, 2018, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the largest-ever coordinated sweep of senior fraud cases, netting 250 defendants charged with scamming more than a million Americans out of an estimated half a billion dollars.

Although the nature of these crimes may differ, they all share one common thread - victims. **April 8-14 is National Crime Victims' Rights Week.** During this week, we, as a community, pause to raise awareness that crime is not just a statistic. It profoundly effects its victims, physically, emotionally and financially. This year's theme is **Expand the Circle: Reach All Victims.** The theme emphasizes the importance of inclusion in delivering assistance to all victims. This Office along with other law enforcement agencies and community service providers across the District work every day to help ensure crime victims have the opportunity to exercise their rights and receive information about available services. While it is important to recognize the many hard-working men and women in our community who provide support and services to crime victims every day, we must never lose sight of the need to continually expand the reach to those who still

<sup>1</sup> Mortality in the United States, 2016 NCHS Data Brief No. 293, December 2017.

<sup>2</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse, Drug Facts, January 2018, [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov), drugfacts\_heroin.pdf.

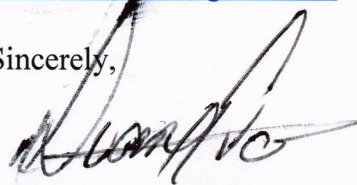
<sup>3</sup> Rachel E. Morgan, Ph.D., and Grace Kena, Criminal Victimization, 2016, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, December 2017, NCJ251150.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.nola.com/crime/index.ssf/page/new\\_orleans\\_murders.html](http://www.nola.com/crime/index.ssf/page/new_orleans_murders.html)

<sup>5</sup> Elder Justice: Strengthening Efforts to Combat Elder Financial Exploitation, GAO Report No. GAO-13-140T, November 15, 2012.

need support and services. This means reaching across professional, cultural, economic, and other divides, listening to the needs of the community and its individual members, and removing barriers to reporting, safety, and accessing services. During this week, local law enforcement agencies have planned a number of events to connect with crime victims who may not be aware of their rights or available services and to honor crime victims. Information regarding these events is posted at our website: <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edla/national-crime-victims-rights-week>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Duane A. Evans", with a stylized flourish at the end.

DUANE A. EVANS  
United States Attorney  
Eastern District of Louisiana