

REMARKS

OF

THE HONORABLE KAROL V. MASON  
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL  
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CRIMINOLOGY  
PANEL TITLED, "INTEGRATING EVIDENCE INTO GRANT MAKING  
AT THE OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS"

ON

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2014  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Thank you, Bill [Sabol]. I'm very pleased to be back at the American Society of Criminology, and delighted to be joined by my colleagues from across the Office of Justice Programs. I'll introduce them all in just a moment.

But before we go any further, this is the ideal venue for me to mention a very important personnel change at OJP. Many of you know that Bill Sabol has been wearing two hats over the last several months. In addition to serving as the acting director of our Bureau of Justice Statistics, he's very graciously – and very ably – taken the helm at our National Institute of Justice until a new, permanent director could be appointed.

Well, last month, the President announced his intent to appoint an NIJ director. Her name's Nancy Rodriguez, and she'll be coming to us from Arizona State University, where she's a professor in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice. She's focused a lot of her research work on sentencing policies and on the role of race in the juvenile justice system, which is music to my ears. These are two areas of intense focus in the Department of Justice, so she'll be a welcome addition.

We're excited to have her coming on board. But I know no one is more excited than Bill, who can now go back to managing just one major science agency. Even better for OJP, the President also recently announced his intent to appoint Bill to be the director of BJS. This is much-deserved, and I couldn't be happier. Over the course of his career, Bill has focused a great deal of his work on sentencing policy and on the community impact of incarceration, and he has a wealth of statistical experience and expertise that has served OJP well. This is terrific news for all of us at OJP, and I'm just thrilled. Congratulations, Bill.

So, as you can see, science never takes a break at OJP – and it remains one of my top priorities. It also continues to be central to the Attorney General's vision for the future of criminal justice. Under his Smart on Crime Initiative, he's directed the Department of Justice to take actions and invest its resources in accordance with the latest data and evidence. Throughout his tenure, he has been a strong advocate of science, from his appointment of the OJP Science Advisory Board to his support of programs that operate on evidence-based principles.

It's a mindset that permeates the entire Administration, all the way up to the White House. Guidance from the Office of Management Budget consistently calls for decisions to be grounded in evidence, and the President has routinely included research set-asides in his budget requests to Congress.

OJP is integral to this push for more knowledge-informed policies and programs. NIJ and BJS have long been the federal anchors of criminal justice science, and they continue to lead our research, statistical, evaluation, and technology efforts. But a culture of science has moved across the agency, and it can be seen in many different places, whether it's in the Vision 21 initiative from our Office for Victims of Crime, or the Smart Policing and Justice Reinvestment initiatives in our Bureau of Justice Assistance, or in

the work of our Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to create a more developmentally informed juvenile justice system.

And just as important as our efforts to expand the knowledge base is the work we're doing to integrate that knowledge into practice. Our "what works" database, CrimeSolutions.gov, now has more than 320 programs and practices, all with ratings for effectiveness. And the OJP Diagnostic Center – the other major pillar of our Evidence Integration Initiative – continues to provide customized technical assistance to help jurisdictions identify and confront persistent, systemic public safety challenges. The Center now has engagements in 28 jurisdictions, working on issues ranging from police-community relations to human trafficking.

As I see it, OJP's role should be to put the full weight of science behind our nation's biggest public safety challenges. One of those challenges is sustaining the remarkable progress we've made in reducing crime over the last two decades.

As you've probably heard, the latest data from the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting program show another year of crime reductions – over 4 percent for both violent and property crimes. This is, of course, welcome news as always. But as BJS's National Crime Victimization Survey showed, there was no change in the rate of victimization for the serious violent crimes of rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Nearly 40% of these crimes were not reported to the police.

We can't be satisfied with either outcome, either that the UCR crime rates will continue to go down or that such a large percentage of victims don't report their crimes to the police. We need to continue to invest in developing knowledge about the reasons for declines in crime – and about unreported crimes. And we need to make sure we're giving jurisdictions the tools and information they need to apply this knowledge, the way we're doing through our Violence Reduction Network. We're providing cities technical assistance that gives them exposure to evidence-based strategies.

We also face an ongoing challenge to the integrity and legitimacy of the criminal and juvenile justice systems, exemplified in places like Ferguson, Missouri. Even as crime rates fall in many places in our country, there are still communities where crime and violence are stubbornly persistent. It's often in these same communities that respect for the law is weak. This is no accident – and I'm sure it will surprise no one here that these areas are primarily communities of color.

One of the many things we've learned through research is that those who come into contact with the police and other justice system agencies are more likely to accept decisions by the authorities and obey the law in the future if they feel they are treated fairly, even when they are penalized by criminal sanctions. Even better, the communities of which they are part will actively encourage respect for the law and cooperate with law enforcement if they believe the system's actions are carried out impartially and in good faith.

Repairing these fractured relationships – between justice system agencies and the citizens they serve – should be a top priority for all of us. This is one of the reasons the Attorney General launched his Smart on Crime Initiative. It’s also a big focus of the President’s *My Brother’s Keeper* Initiative, which is aimed at expanding opportunities for youth.

OJP is playing a big role in *My Brother’s Keeper*. One of our biggest contributions is through something we call the National Initiative on Building Community Trust and Justice. This is a project involving not just OJP, but agencies across the Department of Justice. It’s a major research-based effort designed to expand the base of knowledge about what works to improve procedural justice, reduce bias, and promote racial reconciliation. We’re partnering with a renowned group of experts from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, the Urban Institute, Yale Law School, and the Center on Policing Equity at UCLA to pilot and promote evidence-based practices designed to restore trust between citizens and law enforcement. A huge piece of this effort is expanding our base of research on this topic.

So in spite of our progress – and though our nation as a whole is safer – we are in no position to be content. Significant challenges remain, and I believe that the key to meeting these challenges is our willingness to be led by sound data and research. That’s what we’re aiming at in the Office of Justice Programs: making evidence our guiding principle in formulating policy and designing programs.

I’m very fortunate that my colleagues share my commitment to this goal, and I’m going to let them tell you about the work that each of their bureaus is supporting in service of that goal.

So let me take a minute to introduce them to you. First, you’ve already heard from and about Bill Sabol. He’s the acting director of both the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the National Institute of Justice.

We also have Denise O’Donnell. Denise is the Director of our Bureau of Justice Assistance, and she’s been a huge promoter of evidence-based practices. I’m glad she was able to join me.

From our Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, we have Brecht Donohue, who is here representing OJJDP’s Administrator, Bob Listenbee.

And from our Office for Victims of Crime, representing OVC’s Director, Joye Frost, is Bethany Case. I’m glad that Bethany and Brecht could be here.

I’m going to turn it over to each of them, starting with Bill. After they’ve all had a few minutes to offer an overview of some highlights from their bureaus, we’ll open it up for comment and discussion.

###