

REMARKS

OF

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

AT THE

NATIONAL CRIME VICTIM SERVICE AWARDS CEREMONY

ON

TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2015
WASHINGTON, DC

Thank you, Joye [Frost]. I'm thrilled to join you and the Attorney General for his final National Crime Victim Service Awards Ceremony. We're very happy to have him with us one more time.

I'm proud to be here with so many leaders from throughout the Department of Justice and from across the victims field as we honor these extraordinary individuals, teams, and organizations who have done so much to improve the lives of crime victims in America. Their work – reflected in the extraordinary accomplishments that you will hear about today – has done so much to advance the cause of victims' rights and services in our country, and it has helped to make our country a more just and compassionate place.

I'm grateful to Joye and her fabulous team for all they've done to make this event possible, and for their outstanding work on behalf of victims of crime. We are fortunate to have such a dedicated and talented group of people fighting for crime victims in our country. Guided by their vision – and taking the lead from our Attorney General – we have made victims central to our efforts at the Department of Justice to build an effective criminal justice system. Across the spectrum – from our support of children exposed to violence to our response to elderly victims of fraud – we are working to provide victims the assistance they need and to give you, their champions, the tools necessary to help them.

We know victims and those who advocate for them continue to face significant and growing challenges. Although crime rates across the nation remain at historic lows, victimization is still far too frequent, especially in remote and impoverished areas like Indian country and in distressed inner-city neighborhoods. Criminals continue to find new and more sinister ways to prey upon the vulnerable, whether it's through cybercrimes that target children or by human trafficking operations that use false promises and brutal methods to entice and subdue their victims.

The times call for continued vigilance, and they call for sophisticated methods. And these methods require that we be more knowledgeable about what works to address their needs. Under OVC's Vision 21 Initiative and as part of my office's overall commitment to integrating evidence into practice, we are making research and data the foundation for victim services. I'm very pleased that this year, the Attorney General will present the first Vision 21 Research Award, which underscores the critical role that information plays in building our service capacity. We hope that, by recognizing those who labor to build our knowledge base, we will send a message that science and service can, and should, go hand in hand.

I'm excited about where we stand today. Yes, our work has become, in many ways, more difficult. But the challenges we face have spurred innovation and have helped us to find new and even better ways to reach victims. And one thing has remained constant – the passion behind the work that all of you do. That determined spirit has brought such important changes to the landscape of public safety in America, it has helped millions of people through tragedy and adversity, and it will be the fuel that powers the victims field forward into even better years ahead.

You should all be proud of the work that's been accomplished. I know I'm proud of the role the Department of Justice has played in that work. And I know I speak for the Attorney General when I say that we're all proud to count each and every one of you as partners.

Thank you for all you do.

It's now my honor to introduce our keynote speaker, and the Department of Justice's chief victim advocate.

Throughout his career, Eric Holder has fought to protect the rights and meet the needs of crime victims, from his days as U.S. Attorney through his tenure as Deputy Attorney General and to his extraordinary years – six, and counting – as Attorney General.

In the time I've known him and had the incredible privilege of working for him, I have watched him place victims at the center of every important criminal justice policy decision he has made, whether he was launching his groundbreaking Defending Childhood program or designing his signature Smart on Crime initiative. You could not ask for a stronger commitment to victims than the one you see from our Attorney General.

He has been an ally, he has been a stalwart supporter, and most of all, he has been a friend of the victims field, and we will miss him when he leaves.

Please welcome the Attorney General of the United States, Eric Holder.

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