

REMARKS

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

OF

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

AT THE

NATIONAL FORUM ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE

ON

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ATLANTA, GA

Thank you, Jeanne. I'm very happy to be here in Atlanta to help open this forum, and pleased to join so many policymakers and practitioners from across the country as we discuss the vital issues in criminal justice today.

I want to thank NCJA – particularly Jeanne, Karlton Moore, Cabell Cropper, and Elizabeth Pyke – for their partnership with OJP over the years and across so many issues. NCJA's guidance has been critical to helping us advance evidence-based practices in our own work, especially through the Byrne Justice Assistance Grants program. I'm also grateful to Stephen, Mike, and all our partners at JRSA and IJIS, whose contributions we value so highly. We appreciate their collaboration, and I look forward to continuing our important work together.

It's an exciting time to be working in the criminal justice field. That may seem like an odd statement given the publicity over police-citizen encounters, mass incarceration, and other issues. There's greater scrutiny on justice system practices, and people are a lot more vocal about the problems they see.

But what's exciting is to see the way the field has responded. Rather than entrenching and clinging defensively to traditional approaches, we're finding new ways to meet old challenges. Rather than ignoring the critics, we've opened channels of communication to explore how we can solve problems, together. And rather than defaulting to partisanship, we're reaching across the aisle and discovering common interests and common goals.

I'm proud of the way we've risen to the occasion. I'm proud of the way this Administration, through efforts like the Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing and *My Brother's Keeper*, has acted with such urgency to improve the fairness and effectiveness of our criminal and juvenile justice systems.

I'm proud of the way we've all used partnerships to advance evidence-based practices. And we've just taken another step with the issue of our new Byrne JAG Accountability Measures, developed in cooperation with the field, which will help cement evidence in the bedrock of our flagship grant program.

And lastly, I'm proud of the way each of you is helping to redefine our justice system, working to ensure that it lives up to its potential as a strong force for positive and lasting change.

It really is an exciting time to be a criminal justice professional. We're seeing what a difference our work makes in the lives of citizens and in the health and safety of our communities. We've got a lot to do, but so many good things are happening already, and I know – with all of us working together – many more good things are to come.

Thank you.

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