



Department of Justice

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REMARKS BY

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ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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We are here this morning to receive a document of uncommon importance -- the summary volume of "A National Strategy to Reduce Crime," which was prepared during the past two years by the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals.

The summary volume and the full reports to be published soon contain hundreds of standards and goals which can be utilized by the states and localities in fashioning more effective programs to reduce crime and improve the criminal justice system in every part of the nation.

The Commission was conceived by the Federal government, and financed by \$1.75 million in grants from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. Its work was carried out not by Federal officials, but by state and local officials, along with a variety of community representatives.

The overall objective of the report is to reduce substantially during the next 10 years the crimes of murder, rape, aggravated assault, robbery, and burglary -- while at the same time improving the criminal justice system so that it becomes both effective and fair.

The Federal government is neither endorsing nor opposing the hundreds of specific standards and goals contained in the report, though we naturally agree with its overall objectives. This report was written by state and local officials and is intended for consideration, adoption, and use by their counterparts all over the nation as they choose. It is intended for the use of state and local legislative bodies, as well as for citizens everywhere and their community organizations.

Officials in the criminal justice system, as well as private citizens, may view portions of the report with skepticism, or even hostility, and a few of the standards and goals -- including those dealing with decriminalization, handgun control, plea bargaining, and drug treatment -- may spark controversies.

But I believe that the few controversial items in this report will also produce benefits, for they will spur debate and discussion which in turn will lead to the kind of enlightened action so badly needed in this complex and difficult task of achieving marked and lasting reductions in crime. At the same time, the standards and goals which may cause controversies should not be allowed to eclipse the hundreds of others which will find general acceptance among state and local officials in the areas of police, courts, and corrections.

Some 35 states already are working to implement portions of the Commission's work, and it will be an important element in new programs being fashioned by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration

to provide a higher standard of evaluation for all of the states and localities.

It is not enough for the Department of Justice to award grants.

We must provide leadership with our funding, making certain we can advise states that projects which are funded have a reasonable chance of success, and informing them when we discover that projects which looked hopeful have turned out to be fruitless.

I would like to turn now to Governor Peterson, the Commission's chairman, for any comment he cares to make. After that, he and Donald Santarelli, the Administrator of LEAA, will take your questions.