

Statement of R. Gil Kerlikowske
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National Association of Drug Court Professionals
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Thank you. You had such a great event on Capitol Hill, and I am so sorry that I could not be there. I heard about it from Laurie Robinson and West Huddleston and so many others. As you know, at the time, I was pacing the floor, waiting for the Senate to confirm me, and anxious to start work. When they did confirm me – at 2:20 in the afternoon – I made it to the office 35 minutes later. I'm sorry for the delay in getting there.

I have been on the job for about a month now, and it's been great.

Many of you were instrumental in founding and growing drug court, and all of you have worked tirelessly to end drug addiction. You represent the very best in the legislative and judicial fields and in social and public services.

My friends in law enforcement in the second row, I am so appreciative that you are here. I particularly want to thank Ron Brooks. He is a good friend and the National Narcotic Officers' Association Coalition is a great organization. As Ron often points out law enforcement is not a one-trick pony. We understand prevention. We understand treatment. We understand the role of enforcement. And that's a little bit of what I want to chat with you about today.

But first, let me say West Huddleston, a great a CEO and someone who is becoming a good friend, is taking this organization and drug courts to new heights. Congratulations to you.

I also want to recognize and commend Judge Chuck Simmons for his commitment to reducing substance abuse and crime. I was in the back room listening to his opening remarks.

As Ron mentioned, I grew up in Florida and was Chief of Police in two cities there. I know of the tremendous dedication of Judge Rosnick and Deborah White-Labora, the Miami-Dade county drug court team. What a great tradition to carry on after the work of Judge Stanley Goldstein in 1989. You are to be congratulated.

I would also like to recognize our international partners who are here today, the International Association of Drug Treatment Courts. These are people who are busy establishing drug courts in their own countries, with your help.

I've had thirty years – and it's probably closer to 40 – in law enforcement, which gives me a unique perspective on drug use and its effects on families, schools, neighborhoods. As Chief of Police of Seattle, I enlisted the support of the entire community to reduce crime. When I left office, crime was at its lowest point since 1967. I plan to employ a similar approach to reduce illicit drug production, trafficking, and use. I will rely on all of you, experts and leaders in your states and in the field, to share your experience and knowledge as we develop policies that address all levels of this issue.

Let me state that the President and Vice President and all of us who work for them are firmly committed to providing strong Federal support to increase the capacity for Drug Court, other problem solving courts, and treatment providers. Drug Court is effective in reducing the public health and safety threats of drug abuse. As Police Commissioner of Buffalo, I witnessed the value of drug courts and later worked with former Attorney General Janet Reno to promote them. And today, I'm pleased to report that the Federal government has reconvened its Interagency Working Group on Demand Reduction to help facilitate and coordinate measures to reduce substance abuse, including among criminal justice populations.

Substance abuse poses immense public health consequences and is the largest contributor to crime in this country. According to the Pew Center on States, our Nation's prison population has exploded beyond capacity and our traditional justice system has been inadequate to the task of breaking the cycle of substance abuse and crime. Today, more than 2.3 million adults are behind bars in the U.S., representing one out of every 100 residents.ⁱ Approximately one-half of these individuals abuse drugs or alcoholⁱⁱ. Prison for these individuals has accomplished little to stem the tide of crime or substance abuse. Since 1994 it has been true that upon their release from prison, two thirds of drug abusers are rearrestedⁱⁱⁱ and virtually all relapse quickly to drug abuse.^{iv} Despite the staggering cost to incarcerate these individuals, most return to their communities without treatment, without jobs and without hope.

Drug Court is a proven solution that reduces substance abuse, prevents crime, and saves hard-earned taxpayer dollars. With 2,300 drug courts operational today, approximately 120,000 Americans annually receive the help they need to break the cycle of addiction. Three weeks ago, on my first official trip as Director of National Drug Control Policy, I visited a drug court in Nashville, Tennessee and heard remarkable stories from people on the path to recovery. The data -- which indicate drug court is cost effective and graduates are less likely to recidivate -- show that many will be successful.

In 2007, over 23 million individuals in our country (12 and older) met diagnostic criteria for substance abuse or dependence -- about the same number of people affected with Type II diabetes. However, less than 10% (approximately 2.3 million) received any type of treatment for their disorder¹. Within the criminal justice system, a disproportionate number of State and Federal inmates struggle with drug addiction, but this group of drug-involved offenders typically has even less of a chance of receiving the treatment they need. Because the underlying problem of addiction has not been addressed, when they return to society they are distracted by drug use and as a result cannot hold a job or maintain meaningful healthy relationships. Ultimately they reoffend. We can do better.

We have to change our old, outdated attitudes about drug use and addiction within the criminal justice system. As a Nation, we must address common and pervasive misconceptions. You know the ones: drug addiction is not a disease, treatment doesn't work, treatment is a waste of money,

¹ Results from the 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), 2008, <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/nsduhLatest.htm>

etc. Even for addiction to drugs like methamphetamine, once thought untreatable, we're seeing positive stories of recovery, especially from within the drug court system, and we must promote those success stories. Our Media Campaign at ONDCP and its Anti-Meth Campaign, takes a similar approach, delivering messages - the truth - that "people can and do recover...even from meth."

The success of Drug Court has spawned new generations of problem-solving court programs that are successfully confronting emerging issues for our nation. For example, Veteran Treatment Court is adapting to the needs of our heroes from the armed services, who sometimes have difficulty adjusting to civilian life or coping with combat-related stress, and may become involved with the justice system. Many communities have used the drug court model to address juvenile drug abuse, child abuse, and neglects, impaired driving, mental illness, homelessness, domestic violence, and other pressing community problems. And Reentry Drug Court is assisting individuals leaving our Nation's jails and prisons succeed on parole and avoid a recurrence of crime and drug abuse.

We must also continue to encourage cutting edge research to further the prevention and treatment fields. Key discoveries about the safety and efficacy of medications, such as buprenorphine to treat opiate addiction, have helped thousands of heroin users reduce the urge to use opiates. Recovery from methamphetamine addiction was once thought to be impossible. Now, the promise of healing has brought new-found hope to individuals, families, and communities across this Nation. These and other breakthroughs serve as starting points for further growth in this field, including research in the areas of reducing the misuse of prescription drugs.

The President's Budget request for drug court and other problem solving courts will establish new courts and expand treatment services in existing ones, helping thousands more Americans break the cycle of drug addiction and crime and begin their own road to recovery. The FY2010 budget clearly demonstrates the Administration's strong support to increase drug court treatment, training, technical assistance, research, and technology with \$58.9 million proposed for Drug Treatment Courts at the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment; this is up significantly from \$23.9 million in FY 2009. \$59 million has also been proposed to support establishing and enhancing "Problem Solving Courts Initiative - to include drug courts, mental health courts, community courts, and domestic violence courts. Overall, this would total \$117.9 million to support drug courts in FY2010.

There is also a need for treatment within correctional settings. A \$20 million increase has been requested for DOJ to support the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) Program, which provides treatment prior to release. Another Administration priority is to reduce recidivism and drug abuse by providing ex-offender re-entry support that reduces barriers to employment and improves job retention rates. The President's FY2010 budget supports this goal by requesting a \$15 million increase to support Prisoner Re-Entry and \$30 million for the Second Chance Act.

I know we are all here today because we share the view that addiction is a disease; one that we can prevent and treat. The work that you do for drug courts is part of that effort and I want to thank you once more for all you do in service of your communities, states, and Nation.

To this end, I'd like to recognize NADCP for their important contribution to reducing substance abuse. West, would you please come up to the stage.

In support of and encouragement for continued actions to promote the benefits of Drug Court nationwide, it is my great pleasure to present you with this Letter of Acknowledgement from President Barack Obama, which commends Drug Court for addressing substance abuse and celebrates its the lifesaving work. He begins by sending his "best wishes to everyone marking the 20th Anniversary of the United States Drug Court." And continues by recognizing that the "men and women who work at drug courts are dedicated to improving and rebuilding the lives of others. They have provided lifesaving altering support and counseling to many who have battled addiction. Please accept my warmest greetings on this important occasion. I wish you the best as you continue your life-saving work." The letter is signed Barack Obama.

ⁱ Pew Center on the States (2008). *One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008*.

ⁱⁱ Karberg & James (2005). *Substance dependence, abuse, and treatment of jail inmates, 2002*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Justice; Fazel et al. (2006). Substance abuse and dependence in prisoners: A systematic review. *Addiction, 101*, 181-191.

ⁱⁱⁱ Langan & Levin (2002). *Recidivism of prisoners released in 1994*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice; Spohn & Holleran (2002). The effect of imprisonment on recidivism rates of felony offenders: A focus on drug offenders. *Criminology, 40*, 329-357.

^{iv} Pelissier, B., Jones, N., & Cadigan, T. (2007). Drug treatment aftercare in the criminal justice system: A systematic review. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, 32*, 311-320; Butzin, C. A., Martin, S.S., & Inciardi, J. A. (2002). Evaluating component effects of a prison-based treatment continuum. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, 22*, 63-69; Martin et al. (1999). Three-year outcomes of therapeutic community treatment for drug-involved offenders in Delaware. *Prison Journal, 79*, 294-320; Hanlon et al. (1998). The response of drug abuser parolees to a combination of treatment and intensive supervision. *Prison Journal, 78*, 31-44; Nurco et al. (1991). Recent research on the relationship between illicit drug use and crime. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law, 9*, 221-249.