

Highlights of Key Speeches by Director Kerlikowske

Director Kerlikowske's Background:

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. (*National Association of Drug Court Professionals, 15th Annual Conference, Anaheim, CA, June 11, 2009*)

National Drug Control Strategy:

As we begin developing President Obama's first National Drug Control Strategy, I will work collaboratively with my Federal, state, tribal, and local partners to develop a comprehensive Strategy, guided by sound principles of public safety and public health. We will set aggressive policy goals to reduce youth and adult drug use, limit drug availability in the Nation, and mitigate the difficult and costly consequences associated with drug use. When Congress created ONDCP, the intent was to establish an organization that would utilize data to formulate effective policies.

It is my philosophy that this Administration cannot develop a comprehensive Strategy until these processes yield meaningful data for analysis. The Strategy and the Budget will reflect trends and needs, based on analysis of data and consultation with partners and other experts. In nine months, we will deliver a National Drug Control Strategy and Budget that focuses on the nature and scope of the problems as well as the policies and programs that will have the most meaningful impact. (*Testimony before the US House of Representatives, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on Domestic Policy, Washington, DC, May 19, 2009*)

Drug War Rhetoric:

Words matter, particularly to the people we serve, to elected officials and others, and I believe the "War on Drugs" metaphor doesn't fit. The term "War" limits our tools to deal with the complex problem of the disease of addiction. Someone once told me that when the only tool in the tool box is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail. I know a good deal about what law enforcement agencies do throughout our country. An investigator working a complex drug case, a street officer attempting to shut down a violent open air drug market, or a trooper stopping a shipment of weapons en route to Mexico is a crucial tool, but is just one tool. Often it is law enforcement officers who get drug abusers into treatment when they hit bottom, who volunteer to go into our elementary schools to help with anti-drug education, and who work overtime to help children, who, through no fault of their own, are left to fend for themselves because their parents

have been drawn into a tragic life of drug abuse. We must increase our efforts to help our communities address this problem. We have too much at stake and too much to accomplish to let the wrong words lead us astray. (*National Methamphetamine and Pharmaceuticals Initiative, Nashville, TN, May 20, 2009*)

Commitment to Prevention and Treatment:

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... 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. (*National Association of Drug Court Professionals, 15th Annual Conference, Anaheim, CA, June 11, 2009*)

Treatment/Justice System Collaboration:

When I first considered the President's request to serve as Director of National Drug Control Policy, there were several priorities which immediately came to mind regarding what I needed to accomplish as our Nation's "Drug Czar." One was leading a re-invigoration of our prevention and treatment policies at home. Law enforcement can and should play a far greater role in this area. The strengthening of our treatment efforts, to include increased collaboration between the criminal justice and drug treatment systems through drug courts, smart community policing, and using the authorities inherent in our probation and parole practices, will be an important element of our prevention and treatment policies. Likewise, an increased focus on identifying, at the initial point of law enforcement intervention, drug endangered children and providing them the services they require is another example of how law enforcement, as the usual "first responder" to drug problems, can play a critical role in breaking the cycle of addiction from one generation to the next. (*National Methamphetamine and Pharmaceuticals Initiative, Nashville, TN, May 20, 2009*)

Benefits of Drug Courts:

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.

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. (*National Association of Drug Court Professionals, 15th Annual Conference, Anaheim, CA, June 11, 2009*)

Obama Administration Support to Law Enforcement:

Let me state at the start that the President and Vice President and all of us who work for them are firmly committed to providing strong Federal support for state and local law enforcement. President Obama, during the Top Cops ceremony at the White House Rose Garden on May 12, stated to a gathering of police officers:

“...at this moment of economic challenge, one of the greatest concerns is that we'll see state and local governments forced to lay off police officers -- even though we know that crime has a tendency to go up when the economy is in dire straits. ...So we can't back down, because the job of every American depends on the job you do -- and the resources that enable you to do that job well... And that's why the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act includes \$1 billion to save or create about 5,500 jobs through the COPS Program. And there's another \$2 billion in grants which will help keep police officers on the beat and in the job.” (*National Methamphetamine and Pharmaceuticals Initiative, Nashville, TN, May 20, 2009*)

Pharmaceutical Crimes:

Law enforcement must forge new partnerships in addressing pharmaceutical drug crimes - I know to some extent this is already happening through prescription drug task forces. But all of us have to do much more to make sure enforcement agencies working pill cases are talking to hospital staff, doctors, pharmacists, school nurses, and others in the health community. We need to learn from each other – this is too big a problem to be addressed in silos. Despite an increase in the number of states with active prescription drug monitoring programs, traditional diversion methods – primarily doctor-shopping, theft, forged prescriptions, and unscrupulous physicians and pharmacists working alone or in association – remain the most common means by which individuals illegally acquire these prescription drugs. It is essential, therefore, that public health-based systems designed to monitor controlled substance prescriptions continue to expand at the state and regional level, until they ensure full national coverage. (*National Methamphetamine and Pharmaceuticals Initiative, Nashville, TN, May 20, 2009*)