

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

ERIC -

our first
take at community
prosecutors was
a \$100 M initiative
(we got \$50M in our
FY99 budget proposal).
In FY00, we proposed
\$200M as part of
our \$1.275B COPS
Program. Leanne

*Crime -
Community Prosecutors*

December 4, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: BRUCE REED

SUBJECT: New Community Prosecutors Initiative

Over the past month, we have spoken with the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the National District Attorneys Association (NDAA), and the American Prosecutors Research Institute (APRI) about a new initiative to promote community prosecution as a local crime-fighting strategy. For several years these organizations have been working with the handful of "pioneers" in this area, and they are eager to work with the Administration to launch a new initiative to promote community prosecution throughout the country. This memorandum outlines such an initiative and proposes that you include it as part of the FY 1999 Budget and State of the Union.

Background on Community Prosecution

Community prosecution is the natural next step to community policing. Over the past few years, as thousands of police departments have made the transition from reactive policing to working proactively with community residents, new demands have been placed on local prosecutors -- as well as on the criminal justice system in general. Local police and community residents have called on prosecutors to take their concerns into account in deciding what kinds of offenders to prosecute. Even more, increasingly they have asked prosecuting offices to dedicate attorneys to work in the neighborhoods, to play a role in solving local crime problems, and to reorient their emphasis from simply processing cases to taking on quality of life issues and preventing crimes from happening in the first place.

Perhaps the best example of the evolution of community prosecution can be found in Multnomah County (Portland), Oregon. As part of an overall strategy to revitalize the Lloyd District of Portland, local business leaders called for a number of private and public actions, including improved lighting, better and more coordinated private security, more police officers and -- surprisingly -- a special prosecutor assigned to the Lloyd District. When government funding could not be obtained for a dedicated prosecutor, the local business community raised the money to pay for a prosecutor themselves. Although this course of action raised legitimate ethical issues and concerned some in the community, District Attorney Michael Schrunk decided that establishing a one-year, neighborhood-based pilot prosecution project was in the public interest; he accepted the funds on the condition that if the project proved successful, the County would provide funding to extend it. Today, Portland has 7 Neighborhood District Attorneys (NDAs), with all attorneys' salaries paid for out of public funds.

The community's original request for a dedicated prosecutor was fueled by the desire to punish more severely recidivist offenders, and the NDA initially saw his role as making judges aware,

during trial and sentencing, of the impact recidivists had on the community. Within a few months, however, the community also asked the prosecutor to do something about prostitution, public drinking, drug use vandalism, street fights, and car thefts. The NDA focused his attention on these issues, many of which were related to an illegal campsite in the area. He implemented a long-term plan, including police sweeps and community action, to address the problem. As a result, the incidence of these crimes in the area has decreased dramatically.

Others prosecuting officers that have embraced community prosecution in some form include: Boston, MA; Chicago, IL; Denver, CO; Indianapolis, IN; Kansas City, MO; New York City, NY; Milwaukee, WI; Austin, TX; and Washington, DC (initiated this past year by former U.S. Attorney Eric Holder). A new federal grant program will enable the Administration to help prosecutors' offices join with their police departments in making use of community-based crime strategies. This investment in community prosecutors also will help build support among police and prosecutors for future initiatives to promote community-based approaches in the courts and corrections system.

Outline of Proposed Initiative

Similar to the COPS program, this proposal calls for \$100 million for FY 1999 (and \$500 million for the next 5 years) for the Attorney General to make direct grants, on a competitive basis, to state and local prosecutors for the following purposes:

- (1) Community Engagement. To increase substantially the number of local prosecutors interacting directly with members of the community ("community prosecutors" or "neighborhood DAs"); and
- (2) Problem Solving. To encourage local prosecutors to reorient their emphasis from the "assembly line" processing of cases to solving specific crime and disorder (quality of life) problems in their communities.

A minimum of 80% of the grant funds (\$80 million) would be used to pay for the salaries and training costs associated with hiring or reassigning prosecutors to work directly with police and community residents. Grants would last for 3 years and pay for a maximum of 75% of the costs -- with the federal share declining over the life of the grant. A maximum of 20% of the grants (\$20 million) could be used for other non-salary costs, such as:

- developing and implementing innovative programs that permit members of the community to assist prosecutors in crime control and prevention;
- increasing prosecutors involvement in community activities that are focused on crime control and prevention;
- developing and establishing new administrative and management systems to facilitate the adoption of community-oriented prosecution; and
- developing and implementing innovative, community-based programs that include the courts

and corrections systems.

This initiative proposes allocating half of the grant funds (\$50 million) to prosecutors' offices serving populations of 500,000 or more persons and the remaining half (\$50 million) to smaller jurisdictions. This distribution means that sizable grants of \$1 million or more could be made to a majority of the 130 jurisdictions serving the largest metropolitan areas, and that smaller grants (about \$50,000 to \$75,000) could be made to nearly half the remaining, full-time prosecutors' offices (of which there are about 1,600 total).