



National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards

P.O. Box 16003, Alexandria, VA 22302

(703) 780-3200

www.nacvcb.org

nacvcb@aol.com

2nd Vice President

H. Gene McCleskey

*Crime Victim Compensation Program
Texas*

1st Vice President

Shawanda Reynolds-Cobb

*Crime Victim Compensation Program
Georgia*

President

Deborah Shaw Rice

*Victims' Compensation Program
Maine*

Treasurer

Cletus Nnanabu

*Crime Victim Compensation Program
Washington*

Secretary

George Gutierrez

*Crime Victim Compensation Bureau
Idaho*

Dan Eddy

Executive Director

December 10, 2008

Laurie Robinson
Presidential Transition Team
Director, Master of Science Program
Dept. of Criminology, University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA 19194

RE: Department of Justice and Victims Issues

Dear Ms. Robinson:

We appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and with other groups from the victims field, and for your interest in our offering some comments on issues facing the new Administration. We provide these thoughts on behalf of state crime victim compensation programs that administer Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding, working with the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

1. ***VOCA grants need to be expedited.*** State compensation programs depend on federal VOCA grants to provide full and timely benefits to victims recovering from violent crime. VOCA grants were not approved and made available until late in FY 2008, causing numerous fiscal issues for a number of states. OVC itself has improved tremendously in recent years in being able to turn around applications very quickly, so it appears that grant delays result from structural problems in the chain of decision-making within OJP. We urge that attention be paid to the reasons for those structural inefficiencies, and solutions be found that do not diminish the stature and authority of the director of the Office for Victims of Crime.
2. ***The director of OVC needs to be highly qualified, with experience and expertise in issues relating to crime victims, and knowledge of VOCA grants.*** We have been fortunate to have a number of such individuals direct OVC over the years, and we urge President-Elect Obama to place in this position someone whose credentials and dedication will help the victims field, and the state agencies within it, to move forward.



3. ***VOCA needs to be funded at a level sufficient to sustain and grow both compensation and assistance programs in the states, as well as to provide training and technical assistance to the victims field.*** Efforts to rescind funds should be rejected, and if a cap on annual VOCA spending is necessary, it needs to be at a level that will at least maintain funding at levels that states already depend on to maintain current programs. In recent years, Congress has set a VOCA spending cap that has resulted in devastating cuts to victims programs in many states. We note that VOCA's funding source, federal criminal fines, has provided more than enough money to increase the VOCA cap rather than restrict it, and it is a constant source of frustration that funds intended for victims through VOCA are held back each year.
4. ***VOCA funding needs to be protected from reductions resulting from earmarks and from management and administrative deductions within DOJ.*** A number of such reductions have contributed to the cuts playing out at the state level. In addition, the Anti-Terrorism Emergency Reserve within the VOCA Crime Victims Fund needs to be treated as an amount in addition to the spending cap, consistent with Congressional intent; to do otherwise is to further reduce funds going to the states and ultimately to victims.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input. We look forward to working with the Office for Victims of Crime under the new Administration.

Yours truly,

s/

Dan Eddy

Executive Director