



## **Attorney General Sessions Delivers Remarks on Efforts to Reduce Violent Crime and Fight the Opioid Crisis**

Louisville, KY ~ Tuesday, January 30, 2018

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Thank you, Russel for that introduction, for your leadership in this office, and for your service as an FBI Special Agent. As a former senator, I am certain that your experience as a hostage negotiator must have been useful for Senator McConnell. But seriously, you've made big sacrifices for this country and I want you to know that we are grateful. And I am confident that the people of Western Kentucky are in good hands.

Before I say anything else I want to offer my condolences to the people of Kentucky, who are still in mourning over the senseless shooting that took place in Marshall County last week. This morning Amy Hess, the FBI Special Agent in Charge for Louisville, briefed me on the shooting, and I want you to know that this Department will do whatever we can to be of assistance. Our FBI experts are some of the best but there are no easy answers.

I want to thank you for your hospitality. This is my 34th visit to a U.S. Attorney's Office. I'm always inspired to meet the attorneys, investigators, and officers who are in the trenches every day making us safer.

On behalf of President Trump, I want to thank all of the law enforcement officers who are here with us today. He strongly supports you and honors what you do.

In particular I want to recognize Commissioner Rick Sanders of the Kentucky State Police. Rick has taken the lead on the response to last week's shooting. I'm honored that you're here and I want to thank you for your 24 years in the DEA and 40 years of service in law enforcement. You have made a real difference in this community.

It was largely because of officers like all of you that crime declined in America for 20 years.

From 2014 to 2016, however, the trends reversed. The violent crime rate went up by nearly seven percent. Robberies went up. Assaults went up nearly 10 percent. Rape went up by nearly 11 percent. Murder shot up by more than 20 percent.

Meanwhile, our country has suffered the deadliest drug crisis in our history. More Americans are dying because of drugs than ever before. In 2016, an estimated 64,000 Americans died of drug overdose—one every nine minutes. That's roughly the population of Bowling Green dead in one year. And in 2017 it appears that the death toll was even higher.

For Americans under the age of 50, drug overdoses are now the leading cause of death. And millions of Americans are living with the daily struggle of an addiction.

Sadly, Louisville knows this all too well.

The murder rate doubled in Louisville in just two years. And in December, the Major City Police Chiefs Association of America ranked Louisville as the 11th most dangerous city in the United States.

Meanwhile more people are dying from drug overdoses than ever before. More than 1,400 Kentuckians died of overdoses in 2016. Nearly half of these deaths were the result of fentanyl, and a third involved heroin.

But as we all know, these are not numbers—these are moms, dads, daughters, spouses, friends, and neighbors.

But let me tell you this: we will not stand back and let crime and addiction rise. Plain and simple, we will not allow the progress made by our women and men in blue over the past two decades to slip through our fingers. We will not cede one block or one street corner to violent thugs or poison peddlers.

President Trump knows how to give clear orders. The day I was sworn in as Attorney General, he sent me a simple, straightforward executive order: reduce crime in America.

At the Department of Justice, we embrace that goal. And you and I know from experience that it can be done. Crime rates aren't like the tides—we can take action to help bring them down.

And over the past year, we have taken action. In 2017, the Department of Justice brought cases against the greatest number of violent criminals in a quarter of a century. We charged the most federal firearm prosecutions in a decade. We also arrested and charged hundreds of people suspected of contributing to the ongoing opioid crisis.

We secured the convictions of nearly 500 human traffickers and 1,200 gang members, and worked with our international allies to arrest or charge more than 4,000 MS-13 members.

MS-13 didn't like that, by the way. I saw a news report last week from Voice of America that the MS-13 gang leaders back in El Salvador have taken notice of these efforts. They know that hundreds of their members are now behind bars. So now they're trying to send younger and more violent gang members to the United States to replenish their depleted ranks.

Nationally we are beginning to see positive signs. In the first six months of last year, the increase in the murder rate slowed significantly and violent crime actually went down. Publicly available data for the rest of the year suggest further progress.

These are major accomplishments that benefit the American people. And these are your accomplishments.

At the Department of Justice, we are well aware that 85 percent of law enforcement is state, local, and tribal. These are the authorities that have the critical street level intelligence regarding the criminal element.

We are most effective when these experienced state and local investigators are paired with the resources and expertise of the 15 percent that are our federal law enforcement.

That is the idea behind our crime reduction strategy: Project Safe Neighborhoods, or PSN. PSN encourages U.S. Attorneys' offices to work with the communities they serve to customize their crime reduction strategies.

And this is a proven model. One study showed that, in its first seven years, PSN reduced violent crime overall by 4.1 percent, with case studies showing reductions in certain areas of up to 42 percent. There are Americans who are alive and well today because this program made a difference.

We understand that every district and even every city is different. I have directed Russell and our other U.S. Attorneys to target the most violent criminals in the most violent areas and to work with local police chiefs, mayors, community groups and victims' advocates to develop a custom crime reduction plan. Listening to the people you serve was a winning strategy for me when I was a U.S. Attorney, and I know it will be a winning strategy for you.

In fact, it already is. Russell and the men and women in this office have done an exemplary job of using this PSN model. I'm particularly impressed with the Louisville Metro Intelligence—or LMINTEL—which is an intelligence-gathering collaboration between Chris Evans of the DEA, Amy Hess of the FBI, Stuart Lowrey of ATF, the Marshals Service, Commonwealth Attorney Tom Wine, and Chief Conrad of Louisville police.

In the past year, LMINTEL has led to 140 arrests. Just last week, thanks in part to LMINTEL, a felon who threatened to kill a Louisville Police Officer got a substantial sentence in federal court.

Our goal is not to fill up the prisons. Our goal is to reduce crime, just as President Trump directed us to do.

I'm also impressed with Project Recoil, which is a PSN partnership between ATF, this office, and state, county, and local law enforcement. The goal is to charge violent offenders with the most serious provable offense—and maximize their sentence. I've seen how you've put away felons possessing firearms for 10 and even 15 years. These successes prevent violence and make would-be criminals think twice.

You're doing great work for the people of Western Kentucky.

We are right to celebrate these victories. But we still have a lot more work to do reduce violent crime and turn the tide of the opioid epidemic.

That's why we are also taking steps to decrease the number of overdose deaths.

For example, in August I announced a new data analytics program – the Opioid Fraud and Abuse Detection Unit. I created this unit to focus specifically on opioid-related health care fraud. It uses data to identify and prosecute individuals that are contributing to this opioid epidemic. It can tell us important information about prescription opioids—like who is prescribing the most drugs, who is dispensing the most drugs, and whose patients are dying of overdoses.

The numbers don't lie—even if the fraudsters do. And now the fraudsters can't hide.

I have also assigned experienced prosecutors in opioid hot spot districts to focus solely on investigating and prosecuting opioid-related health care fraud. I have sent these prosecutors to where they are especially needed—including Kentucky.

And in November the DEA reorganized its field divisions for the first time in nearly 20 years. The Louisville field office is now upgraded to become the Louisville Field Division, with jurisdiction over Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

Now I am announcing today that, over the next 45 days, DEA will surge Special Agents, Diversion Investigators, and Intelligence Research Specialists to focus on pharmacies and prescribers who are dispensing unusual or disproportionate amounts of drugs.

DEA collects some 80 million transaction reports every year from manufacturers and distributors of prescription drugs. These reports contain information like distribution figures and inventory. DEA will aggregate these numbers to find patterns, trends, statistical outliers—and put them into targeting packages.

That will help us make more arrests, secure more convictions—and ultimately help us reduce the number of prescription drugs available for Americans to get addicted to or overdose from these dangerous drugs.

I want to personally express my deep appreciation and profound thanks to all the women and men of law enforcement and their families, for sacrificing so much and putting your lives on the line every day so that the rest of us may enjoy the safety and security you provide. We love you and honor your work.

You can be certain about this: we have your back and you have our thanks.

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**Speaker:**

Attorney General Jeff Sessions

**Topic(s):**

Drug Trafficking

Violent Crime

**Component(s):**

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