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## Remarks to National District Attorneys Association

Geraldine Ferraro

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# MONDALE/FERRARO

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REMARKS OF REP. GERALDINE FERRARO  
NATIONAL DISTRICT ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION  
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

AUGUST 13, 1984

Thank you, John Van'DeKamp, for that very kind introduction.

I'm delighted to be here today at this annual conference of the National District Attorneys Association.

And to be here with your President, Edwin Miller; your President-elect, Bob Miller; your Secretary, Rich Daley; and friends.

I would mention the Vice Presidents, but there are nine of them. Any organization that likes vice presidents that much is a good friend of mine.

I've spent as much time being a prosecutor as a politician. And one thing I learned from that experience: prosecutors, especially state and local prosecutors, are on the front lines every day. More than anyone else in our society, it's up to you to see that criminals go to prison and society is protected. The burden of stopping, punishing, and preventing crime falls on your shoulders.

I don't have all the answers to crime. But I do know this: In America, prosecutors are the key to our criminal justice system. And if we want you to perform the awesome job we've put in your hands, we must give you tools -- the support and the prestige -- to do the job.

That is what you can expect from the Mondale-Ferraro Administration. And today, I want to tell you why.

Walter Mondale was Attorney General of Minnesota. I was a D.A. in Queens. We not only understand crime: we've fought it. We not only condemn criminals: we've put them behind bars. If anyone has proven that they're tough on crime, it's the first national ticket in history comprised of two former prosecutors. Walter Mondale and I have fought and we will help you fight to reduce crime and punish criminals.

Today, there are 400,000 people in American jails -- a city the size of Cincinnati, Ohio. But, in a real sense, the rest of us are incarcerated as well.

Fear creates its own prison when our parents are afraid to leave their apartments. Fear creates its own prison when our kids grow up with bars on their windows, when middle class families need to spend hundreds of dollars for locks and alarms, when we have to post armed guards at city schools, just like in a real prison.

We lose a piece of that priceless value called liberty when arsonists turn neighborhoods into burned out moonscapes. And crime is a prison when children from the inner city are locked into a cycle of violence and victim, victim and violence.

This tide of lawlessness reaches every group and every income category. All around the country, everywhere I go, in every congressional district and every city, people are upset -- angry -- about crime. But they want results, not rhetoric.

The Reagan Administration certainly condemns crime. But their performance hasn't matched their rhetoric.

It does no good to blame Democrats and the Constitution and then cut the budgets for crime programs. If we look beyond the speeches and the blue ribbon commissions and the Rose Garden ceremonies, what we see is a pattern of rhetoric, not results.

If this Administration wants to fight crime, why did they begin by trying to cut the budgets of the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the customs patrol and other justice agencies?

Those cuts have finally been restored -- with the prodding of Congress, I might add. But who can calculate the damage to our crime-stopping efforts during the years before they were restored? And why did the Administration propose last year to cut 53% from Justice Assistance to State and Local Governments, money that would have helped localities fight crime?

No government program should be free from tough budget scrutiny. But who here thinks that we can deter crime with fewer cops, fewer judges, fewer agents?

The other day at his press conference, President Reagan asked why Congress won't pass the crime bill? The answer is: We did, two years ago. He vetoed it.

There is something else. A government that cuts funds for drug and alcohol prevention by more than a third since 1980 but spends recklessly on defense distorts the concept of security.

National security must start at home. A country of triple-locked doors surrounded by a wall of missiles is not secure.

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It's not enough for presidents or candidates to say they'll "get tough" on crime. That's nothing more than law-enforcement laetrile. It goes down easy and it won't work.

To fight crime, we must face reality.

Reality means that it does no good to blame crime on one party or another. There aren't Republican solutions or Democratic solutions to crime -- only solutions that work.

And reality means acknowledging that programs promising quick and drastic reductions in crime are nothing more than panacea politics. There's no Kemp-Roth bill to end crime, and if there were, it wouldn't stop crime anymore than that gimmick balanced the budget.

Once we start leveling with the American people, we can begin to make some real progress. For there are several things we could do right now, at the federal level, to strengthen your hand in the fight against crime. Walter Mondale and I will be outlining our crime-fighting program during the course of this campaign. Today, in this first speech, I want to lay out its principal goals.

First, although crime fighting will always be principally a local responsibility, there must be strong, effective federal assistance to local law enforcement efforts. Today, you have virtually no federal assistance. Our Administration will change that. The federal government should help you -- not with a scatter-gun approach -- but with assistance targeted on the most outstanding local law enforcement programs which you and police departments have put in place.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. Until recently, the standard question a prosecutor asked him or herself before bringing a case was, can I get a conviction? But lately, we've learned that only a few criminals commit a great number of crimes. One study shows that only 10 percent of criminals commit up to 50 percent of all crimes.

As a result, more and more the question you ask today is -- is this a career criminal? How many crimes has he or she committed? What threat does this person pose to society? And what can I do to reduce that threat?

Across the country, DAs are asking those questions -- and getting results. You've developed programs to identify and take off the street the most dangerous career criminals. And what I'm saying is that we should help you. I want to see the federal government help those local law enforcement efforts -- like

career criminal programs -- which are working. You need that help. You're not getting it today. And under the Mondale-Ferraro Administration, I pledge that you will have it.

Let me also explain what I do not mean with this proposal. I do not mean that federal prosecutors should intervene and take over prosecution of career criminals from state and local authorities. Senator Kennedy led the fight against that idea, and I'm glad he did. D's can do their own prosecuting, when you have the tools to do the job.

Second, fighting illegal drugs. Lately, the Administration has made much of its anti-drug effort. But you and I know that more than eighty-eight hundred pounds of deadly heroin are smuggled into the United States every year. Illegal drugs are destroying the minds and sometimes the lives of our youth in ghettos and suburbs alike. And 50 to 60 percent of all violent crime is directly related to drugs.

I propose two steps. We must be tougher with those countries which produce the heroin and cocaine until they stop the production and export of these drugs.

And we must put our own house in order. This Administration vetoed the one bill that might have brought some coordination to our fight against narcotics. And as a result, right now, splintered responsibility among federal agencies hampers our effort to interdict drug shipments. This year, drug revenues may reach \$100 billion -- more than twice the annual sales of IBM. If we're going to topple that empire of ill-gotten gains, we need Customs, the Coast Guard, the FBI, the DEA, the State Department, and prosecutors at all levels working together.

Third, it's impossible to be tough on crime without being tough on the use of guns in crime. In particular, we need strong restraints on the manufacture, transportation, and sale of snub-nosed handguns, which number in the millions and which are used for hunting people, not animals.

Not long ago, during a spate of airplane hijackings, a comedian said the solution was simple: "arm all the passengers." That's funny in television but not in real life.

Fourth, we must increase the certainty of punishment. Today only one out of a hundred felonies results in an arrest and conviction. But even when we do catch criminals, too often it's a roll of the dice whether or not they will ever be punished.

That's not the way to deter crime -- nor does it make common sense. I was raised in a family where I learned that if you worked hard and played by the rules, you could succeed. But if you broke the rules, you were punished. I still believe in that idea. And we need to restore it to our criminal justice system.

Particularly at the federal level, we need to look at sentencing reforms, bail procedures, and other parts of our system. When hardened criminals commit crimes, they should be caught, convicted, and camed.

Fifth, if we're going to be tough on criminals, we must show compassion for victims. When I was head of the Victims Bureau in my office, I saw what victims go through. Someone who has been robbed or assaulted or raped can never be compensated for their loss in any real sense. But let's help them through their ordeal. I strongly believe in victim's compensation. Criminals should not only pay back society for their crime -- they should pay their victims too.

These are the principal goals of a new federal commitment against crime. But fighting crime is not solely a government responsibility. Preventing crime is an individual duty which belongs to each citizen. Today, many citizens are voluntarily shouldering that duty. In Neighborhood Block Watches and Senior Crime Patrols nationwide, citizens have united to protect their neighborhood. Mothers Against Drunk Drivers and Parents of Murdered Children are saying they've had enough of senseless deaths and vicious crime. And they're right. This will be a safer nation not only when all levels of government cooperate against crime, but when ordinary families stand up for their rights, speak out against crime, and join the fight.

Of all the voluntary efforts, perhaps the most important takes place within the confines of each home. James Q. Wilson recently said, "Research places the family at the center of any effort to explain or reduce violent or unruly behavior." What he meant was that character is formed in families, not taught in college or instilled by laws. If we do our job at home -- and if as public servants we strengthen the family -- that's one of the best anti-crime programs in the world.

These are all things we're for. But let me tell you, finally, about one thing we are against.

We don't believe that the way to stop crime is to strip Americans of their Constitutional protections. Justice under our system does not exist in spite of -- but because of -- the Constitution. "We the People of the United States in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice . . ." is how the Preamble begins.

In the name of no public cause can we condone subverting the constitution. The fight against crime must take place under the rule of law, relying on the Constitution, with respect for the rights of defendants -- or it's not a fight I want to wage. And neither do you.

But within the Constitution, there's no fight I'd rather wage. I came here to deliver my first speech since the Democratic Convention to let you know that the Mondale-Ferraro Administration will stand by your side in the fight against crime.

So let's get one thing straight at the start of this campaign: no party has exclusive claims on opposing crime. And this ticket is made up of two former prosecutors who have the experience, the ideas, and most important, the commitment to combat crime.

We want to make this a safer America. And together, with you, we will.

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