



**U.S. Department of Justice**

Office of Justice Programs

*Office for Victims of Crime*

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January 1, 1999

Dear Colleague:

For many years, victim advocates and justice professionals have recognized the power of the voice of victims. This year, from April 25 to May 1, 1999, we have the opportunity for our entire nation to share in the voices and visions of victims and those who serve them during the 19th annual commemoration of National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

This year's theme, "*Victims' Voices: Silent No More*," emphasizes that crime victims have powerful voices in our system of justice, in holding offenders accountable, and in making our communities safer for us all. Victims' voices are validated through countless laws that offer them opportunities for input into their cases, and in innovative programs that provide victims with important forums to educate our children, community members, and justice professionals about the detrimental consequences crime has on individuals, neighborhoods, and our nation as a whole.

In federal fiscal year 1998, \$324 million was collected for the Crime Victims Fund (Fund) from fines, penalties, and forfeited bail bonds paid by convicted federal offenders. These funds, *not* taxpayers dollars, are used to support federal, state, and local programs that provide essential services for over two million crime victims each year. The Fund supports state victim compensation and assistance programs that provide crime victims with lifeline services in a time of need. They establish training and technical assistance programs that reach thousands of community- and system-based professionals who assist crime victims, and provide services and technical assistance to victim advocates who serve Native Americans. They help give victims the voice they *need* and *deserve*.

During National Crime Victims' Rights Week, over 10,000 victim service and allied professional organizations across America will sponsor and participate in public education and community outreach activities to focus attention on victims' rights and needs. The staff of the Office for Victims of Crime and I salute you for your ongoing efforts which ensure that victims' rights and