



**REMARKS OF ROBERT L. LISTENBEE
ADMINISTRATOR
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AT THE
“18TH ANNUAL CONGRESSIONAL BREAKFAST & LAW
ENFORCEMENT RECOGNITION NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING
& EXPLOITED CHILDREN” EVENT
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MAY 8, 2013
*REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY***

Thank you John [Ryan] (NCMEC president and CEO) for that kind introduction.

Before I begin my remarks, I would like to thank Senator Coates and Congressman Fattah for joining us this morning.

No other issue touches a collective nerve in this nation—or unites us as a people—than when a child goes missing. We are thankful for your leadership and support as we strive to keep our children safe.

Good morning. This is my first NCMEC Congressional Breakfast & Law Enforcement Recognition Ceremony.

Speaking on behalf of Acting Assistant Attorney General Mary Lou Leary, who could not be here with us today, it is an honor to represent the Department of Justice this morning.

I would like to wish NCMEC a belated happy birthday.

My staff tell me that just last month, NCMEC celebrated its 29th year of operations.

On that day, April 9, 1984, NCMEC opened its doors for the first time – with 3 employees.

Today, NCMEC has 350 employees.

John, I tried to figure out the math on your growth over the years, but I gave up after my calculator exploded.

All kidding aside, I am a long-time admirer of NCMEC's work, and I really look forward to my first visit to your offices in Alexandria to see your operations first hand.

As a parent—and grandparent—I truly appreciate the time and effort you spend protecting our most vulnerable citizens—our children.

Today, we honor several important partners in our ongoing efforts to keep this country's most precious assets safe.

Our communities depend on law enforcement every day. This is especially true when our children need our assistance.

I am proud to be here today to pay tribute to exceptional law enforcement officials and their efforts to protect our children.

In the 29 years since President Reagan signed the proclamation designating May 25th as National Missing Children's Day, the National Center and many others have been tireless champions in our efforts to protect our children.

As the OJJDP Administrator, I oversee both NCMEC and the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program.

The ICAC program wouldn't be the success that it is today without the unwavering support of state and local law enforcement, NCMEC, and our other public partners.

We have a great deal that we can be proud of. Much has happened since that first Missing Children's Day nearly 30 years ago.

Thanks to a growing body of research, we are learning how violence—such as the abductions and sexual violence that you confront every day—can scar a child, often for years.

Children who are victims of or witness violence are more likely to:

- abuse drugs and alcohol;

- suffer from depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic disorders;
- fail or have difficulty in school;
- and become delinquent and engage in criminal behavior.

The emotional damage that violence leaves in its wake can ripple through a child's lifetime. We have also vastly improved how we respond to missing children cases.

Programs, such as AMBER Alert, CART, and Team Adam, have helped us save literally hundreds of children's lives and to solve countless abduction cases.

NCMEC remains a strong force for missing children through its hotlines and other resources, training programs, role as central repository for information on missing children in this country, and its outreach.

We at OJJDP are grateful for our partnership with NCMEC. We've come a long way over the past 30 years.

But when a child is missing, bringing most or nearly all of them home safely is not good enough.

We cannot declare victory in this battle until we can reunite every abducted child with his or her family.

And, as we have seen in Cleveland over the past couple of days, we must always press forward in our efforts to find every missing child.

We never know when one family's tragedy will unexpectedly turn into a joyful reunion and a happy ending for us all.

We have every reason for hope, but victory is not yet in our reach.

So, until that time, I urge you all to keep up the good fight.