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Attorney General Sessions' Prepared Remarks At Lackawann..., sked

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SESSIONS: Thank you, David for that kind introduction and thank you for your service as Cumberland County District Attorney and now as United States Attorney.

You're doing great work, I have to say. Earlier this month you convicted a doctor who had distributed opioids with no legitimate medical purpose-including to a pregnant woman-that caused the death of one of his patients. You seized more than \$1 million in cash during a search of doctor's residence and office. That was great work by you and by AUSA Michelle Olshefski. Great job.

And indeed I want to thank all of our law enforcement officers who are here with us today. Thank you to Christian Zajac of the FBI, Joseph Price of ATF, Jonathan Wilson with DEA, Daniel Brubaker with our Postal Inspectors, Ernie Binder with the IRS, Jamie Holt of Homeland Security Inspections, and Jennifer Ritchey with ICE.

And of course, our work at the federal level to reduce crime could not be successful without the 85 percent of law enforcement officers in this country who serve at the state and local levels. And so I want to thank them, as well. I'm told that we've got 53 state and local law enforcement officers here along with our 18 federal officers-including five District Attorneys, Chief David Souchick, Chief Philip Holbrook, Chief Kenneth Zipovsky, Chief Stephen Margeson, and FOP President Paul Helring.

I'm honored to be with you.

On behalf of President Trump, thank you for your service.

Thank you to Mark Volk, to our Police Academy Instructors, and to the Members of the Board of Trustees: Mike Narcavage, Greg Gagorik, and Dominick DeNaples.

And I especially want to thank and congratulate our graduating cadets. Thank you all for making a commitment to the difficult but noble work of law enforcement.

It is an honor to be here with you all. The President has directed us to support law enforcement-and we are committed to doing that. His first order to me when I was confirmed was to back the blue.

Donald Trump ran for office as a law-and-order candidate and now he is governing as a law-and-order President. Under his strong leadership, we are getting serious about the rule of law.

Today I want to talk about some of the steps that we are taking to help you-our men and women in blue-by restoring the rule of law in our immigration system.

Policing has always been dangerous work. But over the last 30 years, unchecked illegal immigration has made the work of police officers all across America tougher and more dangerous than it ought to be.

Last week, the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security released a report that shows that more than one-in-five federal prisoners is foreign born, and that 93 percent of confirmed aliens in custody were known or suspected illegal aliens.

We're talking about tens of thousands of people. Officers like you had to arrest them. Officers like you had to go into dangerous situations to take these people off of our streets-people who never should have been here in the first place. You shouldn't have to do that. And to add insult to injury, you're paying taxes to incarcerate these people.

There are an estimated 11 million illegal immigrants in this country today. That's a population the size of the state of Georgia.

Pennsylvania alone has an estimated 180,000 illegal aliens. That's more than the population of Allentown, here illegally. And this problem is growing. It is estimated that from 2009 to 2014, 50,000 illegal aliens moved to Pennsylvania. None of these people have a lawful right to be here.

This is a large group of people. Many of these people have committed crimes here.

There are parts of this country where people are living in terror because of the crime and gang activity that illegal aliens have brought here.

There was an article in the Washington Post earlier this week about a middle school in Maryland-just 10 miles from the White House. The vicious gang MS-13 is wreaking havoc in this school and recruiting illegal aliens as young as 15. Students are afraid. Parents are afraid. Even teachers are afraid for their own safety. There have been shootings, stabbings, and beatings reported nearby. An eighth grade girl was allegedly raped by one of the gang members this past fall. She told police-but later she recanted because she was so afraid of retaliation.

Tragic situations like this one are happening not just in Maryland but in cities from Los Angeles to Louisville to Long Island to Boston-all because we do not have a secure Southwest border. That makes your job that much harder.

But even when you're not dealing with illegal immigrant crime directly, you're dealing with it indirectly. For example, most of the heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, and fentanyl, a synthetic opioid in this country got here across our Southern border. Tens of thousands of Americans die every year as a result. This is a huge change in how drugs are distributed.

In 2015, Pennsylvania was sixth in the nation in fatal drug overdoses. Nearly 80 percent of Pennsylvania counties had fatal overdose rates above the national average.

In 2016, following a 37 percent increase, more than 4,000 Pennsylvanians lost their lives to drug overdoses. That's 13 a day. Nationally-65,000.

Our porous Southwest border is a big factor in this problem.

As just one example, in April, we arrested a teen trying to enter the country carrying 14 pounds of fentanyl across the border.

Fentanyl kills more Americans than any other drug. It killed about 20,000 Americans in 2016. A fatal dose is about three milligrams-which means that the 14 pounds smuggled by that illegal alien could potentially be enough to kill millions of people.

In 2017, Customs and Border Protection seized more than 1,100 pounds of fentanyl. Again depending on the purity, that can be enough to kill nearly half the country.

We keep seizing more and more. Since September, fentanyl seizures at the Mexico border skyrocketed by 750 percent compared to the same period in 2017. We cannot allow this to continue. My goal, our goal, is to work constantly to bring these stats down.

Any rational person that takes a look at this situation sees the need to secure the border and end the lawlessness.

It seems unbelievable, but it is true that there is an open borders movement afoot in this country. From coast to coast, there are politicians and activists who think that having any border at all-any limit whatsoever-is mean-spirited, unkind, or even bigoted. Sometimes they try to hide it; sometimes not.

And I'm not just talking about the extremists or known radicals, here. I'm talking about powerful, influential politicians.

The vice-chairman of the Democratic National Committee recently wore a T-shirt that says "I don't believe in borders." Does he believe in America?

The name of the group that organized the Caravan to stampede our borders is "People Without Borders."

We just had the sitting Republican governor of Ohio tell us that illegal aliens who were beneficiaries of the Obama administration's illegal DACA policy-are "American in every sense except their paperwork." Paperwork is important.

A few months ago, I paid a visit to California. While I was there, the Mayor of Oakland has called illegal aliens "law-abiding." By definition that is not true.

In 2013, Hillary Clinton reportedly said in one secret speech, "my dream is a hemispheric common market, with open trade and open borders." This is the presidential nominee of a major political party. On immigration and trade Pennsylvania spoke in this past election.

But these are just the explicit, overt examples. There are plenty of other examples of politicians who try to sound like moderates but who vote for open borders policies. Apparently, even the libertarian Cato Institute does too.

I'm sure you saw the video last week of the Mayor of Philadelphia dancing and singing, "we are a sanctuary city." This is the elected mayor of a major city celebrating his own lawlessness and his own reckless disregard the safety of the people he is supposed to serve. He is celebrating keeping criminals in Philadelphia.

Sanctuary policies are when cities, counties, or states refuse to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement. When they arrest a criminal who is wanted for deportation, they don't tell immigration enforcement. They just release them back into the community.

In other words, sanctuary cities intentionally keep criminals in this country.

Thousands of times daily, one jurisdiction holding a prisoner safely, turns them over to another to face additional charges. But this simple and important lawful act, is rejected by sanctuary jurisdictions. They deny this respect to our ICE officers, forcing them to search for the prisoner in communities-a far more dangerous and difficult task.

Philadelphia is not giving "sanctuary" to Americans-they're giving sanctuary to foreign criminals who are illegally in this country.

At their root, sanctuary policies are a rejection of all immigration law. If you won't deport somebody who came here illegally and then committed another crime, then who will you deport? Nobody.

It cannot be that someone who illegally crosses the border and two days later arrives in Sacramento, Louisville, or Philadelphia is home free-never to be removed. That's de facto open borders.

That is an insult to the rule of law and our law officers. Any crimes committed by an illegal alien are, by definition, preventable. They should never have happened because the criminal should never have been in this country in the first place.

"Sanctuary" cities send a message to criminals: stay here and we will protect you. That directly attracts more criminals. If you commit a crime here, then you won't be deported.

Just ask the people of Philadelphia.

To take just one example, an illegal alien from Gambia allegedly shoved his girlfriend into a hot oven during an argument. He was arrested by Philadelphia police and ICE requested that he be handed over for deportation. The request was denied.

Our incredible ICE officers eventually found her attacker and arrested him, but they should not have had to. ICE tells us that they are able to locate only about six percent of the criminals they ask sanctuary jurisdictions to turn over. The other 94 percent are walking free.

And we're talking about criminals here. ICE says that nine out of ten of the illegal aliens that they arrest in the interior have criminal records. Nine out of ten. Seventy-two percent are convicted criminals.

Sanctuary policies are terribly wrong. And under President Donald Trump, the Department of Justice is not going to stand idly by while our laws are being nullified and undermined. We are taking action against sanctuary policies.

In March, the Department of Justice sued the state of California over their sanctuary laws. I am confident that we are going to win this case.

We have also supported the state of Texas in its successful efforts to ban sanctuary cities statewide.

Since I became Attorney General, we have filed briefs in support of state or local law enforcement in defensive litigation in about thirty cases. A number of courts in these cases have ruled in our favor.

We are also channeling our law enforcement grant funding to the majority of cities, towns, and counties that cooperate with federal law enforcement. Unsurprisingly, sanctuary cities like Philadelphia and Chicago have sued us for doing this. They want our money but they don't want to cooperate with our federal officers as we cooperate with them in a host of matters.

We are fighting in court. And we're going to keep fighting.

Our goal is to reduce and ultimately to end illegal immigration. Whether you think we should have a lot of immigration or only a little, we should all agree that there should be zero illegal immigration.

We have to have borders. I know of no other developed nation-state that does not understand this concept.

The American people certainly understand it. Back in March, Gallup took a poll that asked if people worry about immigration. The number one answer: "a great deal." Second place? "A fair amount." The top two answers were the answers most concerned with illegal immigration.

For decades, our people have been pushing our elected officials for an immigration system that is lawful and that serves our national interest-one that we can be proud of and that's fair and just. There is nothing mean-spirited about that. The American people are right and just and decent to ask for this.

Ultimately, it will take Congress to give us that system. If they wanted to, Congress could end illegal immigration tomorrow. I hope that they will.

I believe that our political leaders owe it to you, our fabulous law enforcement officers, to get this issue right. We've got to stop the flow of drugs and crime into America. It is not fair to keep asking you to go into dangerous situations.

We are under no obligation to accept a single criminal into this country. Not one. Those whom we do accept into this country should have a crime rate of zero.

This is a great nation-the greatest in the history of the world. It is no surprise that people want to come here, and we have the most generous laws in the world. But they must do so properly. They must follow our laws-or not come here at all.

And so this Department, under President Trump's leadership along with the Department of Homeland Security, is enforcing the law resolutely. We will finally secure this border so that we can give the American people safety and peace of mind.

That's what the people-and especially you, our brave men and women in blue-deserve.

Thank you.

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