

Memorandum



Subject	Date
Interview With Ron Ostrow	May 6, 1982

To The Attorney General

From John Roberts *JR*

Ron Ostrow, who covers the Department for the Los Angeles Times, is preparing a major story on how the policies of the Department affect the average citizen. He has already interviewed Rudy Giuliani, Rex Lee, Lowell Jensen, Paul McGrath, Bill Baxter, Brad Reynolds, Carol Dinkins, Ted Olson, Glenn Archer, and Jon Rose concerning their specific areas of responsibility. The interview with you is the culmination of Ostrow's preparatory work and is a good opportunity for us to try and ensure that the article -- which should be a major one -- conveys the right tone.

Points to try and make during the interview:

- o You have interviewed many people in the Department and I'm sure you have found them sensitive to the ways in which our policies affect the average citizen. That really is the bottom-line question whenever we consider policy issues: which course of action will make things better for the average citizen?
- o The Department of Justice probably has more direct impact on average citizens than other departments. The activities of departments such as State, Defense, and Commerce are of course important, but they tend to have indirect effects. We are concerned with the direct application of federal law to people and businesses. Furthermore, many of the other departments act by changes in the law, and that brings us into the picture.
- o Much of our impact is through defending government programs and policies. We did, for example, successfully defend the PATCO policies in the courts, to cite just one prominent example.

- o One fact that is often overlooked is that the Department is primarily a field operation. Our greatest impact on the average citizen is probably through the U.S. Attorneys offices across the nation, which handle over 85% of all Department of Justice litigation. Our concern with the subject of your article -- impact on the average citizen -- is precisely the concern that led us to set up Law Enforcement Coordinating Committees in each district. These gatherings of federal, state, and local law enforcement officials in each district will help focus on the specific needs of the citizens in that district, and will help direct federal resources to where they can have the greatest impact.
- o Another initiative on the field level is the bringing of the resources and expertise of the FBI into the war on drugs, joining forces with DEA. This has already had a significant effect, as we've seen street prices of drugs rise as supply has been cut off by heightened efforts in importing areas such as South Florida. Drug abuse is not only devastating to the user, and his family, but also breeds so much violent crime. Our efforts in this area should help reduce the danger of the drug trade to the average citizen.
- o Violent crime is of course one problem that directly affects too many of our citizens -- about one out of every three households were touched by violent crime last year. U.S. Attorneys and LECC's are focusing prosecutorial resources on this problem, which is basically a local one. We have a legislative reform package which, if passed, will also have an impact: bail reform, exclusionary rule, habeas corpus. There is broad support among the citizenry for these proposals.
- o Our antitrust enforcement activities parallel our general concern with excessive regulation. By promoting competition and the workings of the free market we help ensure more and better goods and services for the average citizen at more attractive prices. Excessive regulation and cartel activity exact costs on us all in the form of inflated prices.
- o In the civil rights area our policies also have a direct effect. We continue to bring actions to guard against impermissible discrimination. The average citizen, however, is no longer burdened by intrusive

remedies which have not been proven to be effective. We no longer demand busing, so disruptive to the education of our children, or quotas, which have been so divisive in the workforce. We've processed thousands of voting changes, affecting individuals directly in the exercise of their franchise, from broad issues of redistricting down to the details of location of polling places and hours the polls are open.

- o In the Tax Division we are focusing on prosecuting those who market phony tax evasion schemes. This should make the average citizen who honestly pays his taxes feel better.
- o The Civil Division and U.S. Attorneys have begun a debt collection program, bringing suit against often successful people who simply do not pay back student loans and the like. This will affect the average citizen by helping to promote the soundness of those programs for those who use them in good faith.
- o Our judicial restraint program, and our appointment of judges who recognize the limited nature of their role, also directly affects the average citizen, by limiting the intrusion of the courts on his daily life.
- o The Lands Division directly affects people through its enforcement litigation and in other less obvious ways. For example, it has successfully sued to recover the costs of suppressing forest fires on federal lands, costs which would otherwise be born by the taxpayer.
- o Our immigration policies have clearly had a direct effect on average citizens. South Florida, for example, no longer faces the burden of a steady flow of illegal aliens from Haiti, primarily because of our detention and interdiction policy. The interdiction policy has also saved Haitian lives.