

**CONFERENCE ON SCHOOL SAFETY**  
**Tuesday, October 10, 2006**

**WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS**

*Margaret Spellings, Secretary of Education*  
(8:30 AM to 8:40 AM)

**MS. SPELLINGS:** Good morning. Thank you, everyone, for being here this morning. I know you all came long distances on short notice, and I'm very grateful that you're here. I think it's important that we respond as immediately to the recent incident that has occurred in schools across our country and thank you very much for responding so timely.

Thank you also to our host, 4-H, for all of your great work. We're thrilled to be here, and what a great facility this is for such an event. I'm very grateful to you.

Every single person in this room is here for a reason because you represent organizations that can and do and have in many or most cases played a role in making sure that schools are ready, that they can respond, and that they can recover. So I'm very glad that your organizations are here, and there will be a little call to arms before the day is over about things that we can and continue to do to gather—to make sure every community is as prepared as possible.

We have all had heavy hearts obviously as we've watched the events of the last couple of weeks unfold. And our sympathies and prayers go out to the victims and to the families and the communities that are coping with the recent situations. You know, as all of us who are parents know, you know, it's frightening, and you certainly get the weightiness that this could really happen anywhere.

And so that's why we educators, we in the education business, for your law enforcement folks, we call this a teachable moment. That means this is a time for us to take stock, to reflect, to make sure that not only do we have the world's most effective, world's best plan, but that every single person who needs to know is aware of what the plan is. You know in education, I think it's a constantly changing cast of characters with new families and new parents and new personnel. And I think we really can never let our guard down and that certainly is one of the things that was made clear to us last week. So it's a difficult time, but it's a time for us really to all come together and refresh what we need to know, what we need to do.

As you all know, for those who have been working in this field for a long time and representing organizations that have been doing this work, a lot has been done. One of the silver linings of 9-11 was that we started to take stock of our preparedness in communities and obviously—then the wake of Columbine, schools were very much attuned to what was going on. And so some things—some planning has been done, but we can always be smarter, be more current and work more effectively.

There are lots of resources that are available to all of us. I hope that you all picked up one of the brochures that have some of the resources. It's a time for parents, for students, for families to ask questions, to take stock, and to make sure that they're aware.

As you will hear, and as many of you know who have a lot of expertise in this field, there's a lot of research about effective practices. And in many cases we know what strategies work. We know what to do, and we need to bring those effective practices to bear. So our Attorney General will lead our first panel on working with law enforcement officials, working between educators and law enforcement to make sure that we have every person who needs to be at the table, at the table, to be ready to make suitable plans for unique local situations.

I will moderate the second panel on how schools and communities can create safe educational climates and be better prepared for emergencies, what school people can do. And then after lunch, I'll lead a third panel on helping communities recover. So we're going to be ready, we're going to be responsive and then we'll be ready to talk about recovery in our third panel.

So we have a lot of ground to cover in this day. Thank you again for being here. And now it's my pleasure to introduce my friend and our great Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. Thank you.

(Applause.)

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## **PANEL I: PREVENTING VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS**

*Moderator: Alberto Gonzales, Attorney General*

(8:40 AM to 9:40 AM)

### **Panel I Participants**

Jeffery Dawsy, Sheriff, Citrus County  
Sheriff's Office, Beverly Hills, FL

Delbert S. Elliott, Director of the Center  
for the Study and Prevention of Violence,  
University of Colorado, Boulder, CO

Thomas Kube, Executive Director and CEO,  
Council on Educational Facility Planners,  
Scottsdale, AZ

Georgianne C. Rooney, Threat Assessment  
Specialist, U.S. Secret Service National

Threat Assessment Center, Arlington, VA

Fred Wegener, Sheriff, Park County, CO

Gregory A. White, U.S. Attorney, Northern  
District of Ohio, North Ridgeville, OH

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**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Thank you. Let me begin my thanking Margaret Spellings for outstanding leadership, and also of course thanking the President of the United States who is very, very concerned about the safety of our children. And he wants to ensure that we are doing everything we can at the federal level, at the state and local level to create a safe environment so our children can learn.

This particular panel is going to examine the scope of the school violence problem and discuss concrete ways that we can prevent future tragedies. And we've learned a lot of lessons already at the law enforcement level from tragedies like Columbine. And the goal of this best practice session is to share practical ideas and solutions to ensure that everyone knows all the resources and information that's already available out there.

We are doing a lot to make our school safe. A lot of people don't know all of the resources that are available. And part of today's dialogue is to ensure that people have a better understanding of the help that is available out there already.

The panel discussion will focus specifically on the scope of the problem, threat assessment, physical facility security, specialized enforcement expertise and law enforcement community outreach.

I am joined by an outstanding panel of experts. But before introducing our panel of experts, I want to emphasize to the audience that we understand that many of you, yourselves, are experts and have a lot to contribute to this debate. And we hope that this—the event today will initiate further discussion amongst experts on the stage, experts in the audience and experts around the country.

I'm going to start at my far right, your far left. Mr. Tom Kube. He's executive director and CEO of the Council of Educational Facility Planners. Next to Mr. Kube is Dr. Del Elliott, director of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Next is Mr.—Sheriff, Fred Wegener of Park County, Colorado. Next is Ms. Georgeanne C. Rooney, a Threat Assessment Specialist for the U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center. Next to Georgeanne is Sheriff Jeffery Dawsey of Citrus County, Florida. And finally Mr. Greg White, who is the United States Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio.

Now I'd like to begin by asking generally about the scope and nature of the problem. In recent weeks, there have been four incidents and three school shootings that have caused many moms and dads across the country to ask are our schools safe. Is my child safe when I send little Johnny or little Jane out the door every morning. Are they

going to be safe in our schools. Dr. Elliott, I'd like to begin with you. Can you put these disturbing events in the context for us. Are America's schools safe?

**DR. ELLIOTT:** I think that the most important fact to say right off the bat is that our kids are safer at school than they are in almost other places. They're safer there than they are in a shopping mall or out on the streets, or even at a fast-food restaurant, unfortunately and even in their own homes. So the risk of being murdered at school is 70 times greater away from school than it is at school. So schools are still relatively safe places.

But these events of the last week and the earlier events at Columbine and events like that involve—that there is a real violation of the public trust when something happens at school because the expectation is that school will be a safe place.

Unfortunately we are seeing a change in the trends around youth violence nationally. So we enjoyed a decade of declining involvement in violence on the part of young people, and declining violence at school. But the last two years we have seen a reversal of that trend. So gang activity is on the increase again. The number of school-related deaths in the last two years is twice what it was in the two years prior to that. So we are seeing a resurgence in youth violence, and that is a concern. We know that 6 percent of 12 to 18 year olds attending school reported that they carried a weapon to school in the last 30 days. That's a real concern. We are seeing the highest proportion of students reporting that they were threatened or injured at school that we've seen since CDC started collecting that kind of information. So we are seeing an increase in the risk of violence at school and more generally on the part of young people.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Now are these primarily—are these gang-related, are these random acts of violence? How would you characterize the recent trend?

**DR. ELLIOTT:** I think the recent trends are first gang-related, that is the truces that were worked out in the mid-'90's when we had the violence epidemic in this country are breaking down. So we are starting to see increased gang activity. And we're still seeing the kinds of conflicts which always existed at school, the bullying events, kids who feel that they're disrespected. Those events are still very much with us, and the conflicts around girlfriends or some kind of grievance that two people have with each other. These are the primary causes, or the primary events which precipitate violence.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Any particular strategies you think would be effective based upon your research and work?

**DR. ELLIOTT:** There are several things I think we have to emphasize as being very important. I think our first line of prevention is really having a good intelligence. After Columbine, one of the recommendations that was put forth by the Columbine Commission was that we have a state-wide hotline, so that individuals who had some

knowledge of an event could report that in a confidential manner. So I think that is really our first line of defense.

We know that most kids who are planning a violent event tell somebody. They talk about it. And because they do, there is an opportunity for us to know. I think in the last—since Columbine, you know, we have averted many, many, many serious violent crimes because we got a tip that it was happening. I think the code of silence has been largely broken because of Columbine and events like that. And so we need to enlist our students and our parents and members of the community to participate in helping us to anticipate these kind of events. I think that's our first line of defense.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Any other panel members have anything they want to add with respect to the importance of intelligence gathering?

**SHERIFF DAWSY:** Yes, sir. I would tell you that the School Resource Officer program—and I can only speak from my community—is probably one the core issues on intelligence. And I think we need to start in the elementary level and then work our way through into the high school level.

The elementary is truly the formative years, and if we can develop a good bond with our young students as they come out of there, that the possibilities of violence, we may be able to negate them through good intelligence. Prime example in our county a couple of years ago, we had a relationship, a young man, a young girl, their relationship started to deteriorate. And he got upset because she had another boyfriend and was going to bring a gun to school, and did bring a gun to school. But because there was intelligence and information, the student was able to get a hold of the School Resource officer, give him that information. We were able to intercede the young man before he got on campus, recovered the gun and stopped the shooting.

The elementary school is kind of a new venue for a School Resource officer, but we have so many opportunities there where we can teach drug education. I know one of your key things is the cyber safety issue, the Child Allure program. When you developed that foundation and that core group of trust, I think it will transcend through later years, and may avert some of the tragedies that we've have.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** So you think this is something that we need to focus on beginning at the elementary school level?

**SHERIFF DAWSY:** Yes, sir. And, you know, one of the things that we were sharing about the safe school inter-agency program, I think there's another thing law enforcement can do, and that's the sharing of information between all social groups that deal with children.

One of the things that the Doctor was indicating that, you know, one of the things we have to do is break down the privacy concerns, that more important is being help our children. In our community we have a footprint down that has not been duplicated before

in which we have five pilot schools. Sam Hemmel, who's the superintendent, myself, and a young lady by the name of Rena Jablonskus (sp) organized this. And we bring players to the program, and we do it on the elementary, middle and high school. And what we're trying to do there is trying to look at these kids, if there's a big issue that occurs at their home, and I'll talk about at an elementary level, where there's a domestic--a young boy sees his mom get abused by the father. That School Resource officer through our computer system is immediately contacted and told that on Monday morning, this young man may be a person of interest, a child of interest.

And confidentiality is the key. Only a core group of people are brought together to deal with it. And if we found out that this child needed some sort of mental health counseling or some sort of social services, because of the relationship and the memoranda of understanding that we have, we're able to get that child into a program almost immediately. That has not been done before. Sharing of information has always been the core. If you ask the educators and law enforcement--we do an action, we give it to the school system, the school system gives it to the mental health facilities or any social service, we never communicated back and forth as to what we're doing with this child. There was always huge voids.

We feel that we have a system in place right now that takes those voids out of the picture, that the school system knows what's happening, law enforcement and all social services, everybody that is involved with that child with confidentiality, and we've seen some very good things where we've got some children that were possibly suicidal out of the bad environment. And we were also able to get them into alternative housing. So that's just a program that we have going on.

**DR. ELLIOTT:** We also have a number of programs which have been proven effective in dealing with the bullying problem. We have the Obey Us Bullying Prevention program, for example, which has been reviewed and has very credible--

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Can you discuss that briefly?

**DR. ELLIOTT:** Yeah, that's a program which brings the community and the school together around planning for how you deal with bullies. It involves changing the norms at the school so that the students don't become participants in the bullying event by crowding around and encouraging the bully on. It involves working directly with the parents of the bully and the parents of the victim in teaching how to avoid becoming a victim. So we've got a program which is a good program. It can cut bullying on the school campus by 50 percent or more.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Now putting aside the violence that's related to gangs or drugs, do you think we have a pretty good idea of the causes for youth violence in our schools?

**DR. ELLIOTT:** I think we have a pretty good idea of those causes. It includes two different onset trajectories. That is there's a group of young people we can identify

very early, and it's as early as age five or six. Kindergarten, first grade teachers can identify these kids. They're already out of control. And we know that the causal factors there are primarily the quality of care-giving that's taking place in the home, and some heritable traits, attention deficit disorder, impulsivity, and those kinds of things. Those kids, if they aren't dealt with early, go on to be life-time, violent, criminal persons.

But there's a second onset trajectory which isn't as well known. And that involves a set of risk factors which don't appear until after the onset of puberty. For this group of young people, it's a much more complicated causal--set of causal factors. It involves the peer group, and whether or not this kid is accepted by their peers, which becomes a critical issue as a part of that transition out of childhood and into adulthood. It involves the school and what's happening at school. It involves the neighborhood and the community in which the kids live. So it involves a more complex set of risk factors. An example of this would be Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. There was nothing in their background which would have allowed us to predict that during their adolescent years, they would become involved in such a terrible violent act.

That late onset group involves then the peer group to school and the community. It involves a deep-seated rage. It involves anger. It involves being marginalized at school and cut off from peers. So we know a lot about those factors and those conditions.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Well, as to that first set of categories, there are early warning signs. Is that information somehow translated, or transmitted to the schools, and can it be done in a way that doesn't pigeon-hole a young child as a troublemaker from early on?

**DR. ELLIOTT:** I believe it can, and I--and here we're talking about doing the same kind of information sharing that the sheriff was talking about. So we have a model inter-agency agreement that we give to all schools in the state of Colorado after Columbine, which brings together law enforcement, schools, mental health, social services, and in some cases, faith community or YMCA groups that work with kids. And it creates a confidential setting in which information is shared so that you can involve an early intervention for kids. It might just involve a relatively minor thing like just getting a counselor to sit down and talk with the kid, all the way to the point that it might involve getting Protective Services involved in actually removing a child from the home.

This group, because it includes law enforcement, can actually implement--has the authority to implement a wide range of possible interventions, so that if it requires a search warrant to look for bombs being made in somebody's garage, it can be done by this group. And yet you're keeping the information confidential so you aren't labeling the child.

And these are the people who have the skill and the knowledge and the ability to make these kinds of judgments, whether there's an immediate threat or whether it's not an immediate threat and can be handled in less formal ways. And I think that that's where the burden for making decisions ought to take place. I don't think we should ask our teachers to be making judgments about whether there's a serious mental health

problem here, or whether there's a serious threat here because of an essay which was turned in.

So we want to give that responsibility to this team that has the ability to make that kind of decision, where they share information. And I think that we can intervene successfully with kids long before they get to the point where they're ready to commit a serious violent act.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Okay.

**MS. ROONEY:** Just along the lines of the findings from the Secret Service and the Department of Education report where we applied our knowledge, our expertise and targeted violence towards public officials, we partnered with the Department of Education in the aftermath of Columbine. And some of our key findings were that these attacks are often planned well in advance. And the planning is often detectable and observable if you know what questions to ask, and you know what to look for, and what communications to look for also because these individuals, over 81 percent had communicated their intentions somehow, either through direct communication, a website maybe perhaps.

But what helps solves these things--I mean helps to pick up the information that is often out there in advance of these incidents is establishing a team approach, a multi-disciplinary team that develops the capacity to be able to pick up this information that's often out there. And it's just people that aren't talking to each other and don't know what to look for. So if you have law enforcement working with education and social services in advance of something occurring, it helps the process move a lot smoother and helps people work together and use a threat assessment approach and ask questions, and determine what's out there in advance.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** A lot of people don't realize that the Secret Service has been very much involved in this whole issue of school safety. Why don't you talk generally about what some of the things the Secret Service has been doing?

**MS. ROONEY:** Sure, sure. Well, we conducted some operational research about our targeted violence directed at public figures and public officials that really helped inform the way we as an agency conduct our threat assessment investigations. And in the wake of Columbine, we partnered with the Department of Education to apply this research, this operational research to the problems that we were experiencing in schools. So we were able to identify, as you were speaking about the scope of the problem earlier, through our research that's targeted violence in schools. The earliest case we came upon was in 1974. We completed data compilation (inaudible) in 2000, and we identified 37 instances of targeted school violence where a parent or a recent former students took a weapon to their school. 37 instances involving (inaudible) attackers. That's over about a 26-year period, so it is really a very limited population there.

And as such, you can't draw a profile. I know a lot of times people think a profile that's out there, and there is no profile, but there are planning indicators in advance. There are behaviors that you can look at.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** What kinds of things should we be looking for?

**MS. ROONEY:** Definitely weapons acquisition, if a student is making an attempt to acquire a weapon sends up a red flag. Also a lot of the students, almost 100 percent of the students that we looked at in our study had difficulty dealing with a significant loss or failure. And that's not to say students deal with losses or failures often, a lot of times. They can handle it, but it's that one student that seems to really be having problems, and maybe the students around them are concerned that they're not acting normal, and they're concerned for how they're dealing with maybe the loss or a death or an illness or a divorce, how they're handling loss or failure.

And another thing that we found was in over 81 percent of the instances, that these people communicated their intentions. As I was saying earlier, they communicated in some way, somehow. And that's such a key finding we think in the area of prevention that we're actually currently conducting a new research project, and that will be called the Bystander Study. And again it's in partnership with the Department of Education and McClain Hospital. And we're going out and interviewing those students who had the knowledge beforehand that these attacks were somehow planned, and yet maybe didn't put the pieces together or perhaps didn't have an educator or someone at the school or just a responsible adult in general who they felt they could have brought the information forward to. So we're trying to see who those students are, what information they had in advance and why they didn't bring it forward to an adult.

And then we've also gone out, and we're conducting interviews with students who did hear information and actually brought it forward. They were pro-active, and they shared the information with an adult, and their belief through their actions to have averted an incident of targeted violence. So it's very enlightening to see what the two groups—if there's any differences, and also how we can move more students into the second group to get them—if you hear of something, please bring it forward, and you can protect your students and your fellow peers. So we're currently working on that. We've completed interviews and working on data analysis. And we hope to get it out in and make a difference and improve the lines of communication between students and teachers and educators.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** What about if the attacker is someone from outside the school? Have you found that there is some kind of relationship with the school? What kind of relationship exists?

**MS. ROONEY:** Unfortunately our research, we deal specifically with targeted violence by students.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Okay. Can you provide an example of a tragedy that was averted by using threat assessment information?

**MS. ROONEY:** Yes, as a result of our study, our publications which are available at the Secret Service website, we have our final report that details the findings. We also have a guide that helps schools and law enforcement agencies implement the findings and work together and establish a Threat Assessment program. And it was through the establishment of such a Threat Assessment program that a retired Chief of Police, Art Pelley, who's in the audience today from New Bedford, Massachusetts, was able to establish a Threat Assessment program, working with the school and his community of New Bedford, and getting police and the educators to work hand in hand and establish this, and he sees personally some obstacles that they had to overcome and misconceptions they may have had about each other, and just different legislation and laws that they worked with to help form the bonds and establish the multi-systems approach and working with the social systems. And through the establishment of this program, they were able to detect a plot under way to conduct an act of targeted violence at their school, and they were actually successful in uncovering this plot and got some prosecutions from it as well. So it has been proven to work and in good instances.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Good. Let's turn the focus a little bit on the facilities themselves. I mean what steps can be taken to make the facilities that house our students safer?

**MR. KUBE:** Sure. Well, just to frame out a little bit, the Council of Educational Facility Planners is a U.S. based resource that's been around for 85 years. And we are an organization of different perspectives that plan, design and construct schools. And by that I mean we produce resources, documents, research studies, convene workshops and training sessions on how to plan, design and construct those facilities. And that information is also available on our website for the general public to access.

But you're focusing on different aspects of the planning and design of the building, which you consider part of the natural and the mechanical type strategies that are available to design safe buildings, access points, entries, exits, lines of sight within the hallways, use of closed circuit television systems to monitor areas of the grounds that might not be easily accessible. You're also looking at designing sight lines into buildings where administrators and faculty can observe what's happening in hallways and corridors, designing stairwells and so forth to avoid secret hiding places and things of that nature.

They're also looking at designing facilities so you don't have the traditional double-loaded corridors where at the bell, everybody empties out into one common space where you've got a number of children jostling themselves, particularly the high school level. They're also a number of strategies that are used in larger schools. For example, in our newer suburban areas, or even in some of our urban settings, you've got the large high school settings that go over 1500 to 2000 students. And that's a lot of kids to put in one physical environment. There are strategies to break up the building into smaller

communities, learning communities, or houses, as they might be termed, to keep them not mingling, all of them, all at the same time, so the kids get a sense of community within the school.

The buildings are also very expensive propositions to the point that they're no longer just open 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. for school use alone. They're becoming systemically integrated community use facilities. You might have community pools, performing arts centers, senior centers, other aspects of community use tied to the physical space, typically at a middle school or a high school level. And there are examples of that to where you can design the facility to where the public access is different than the student access, where you've got your bus and student drop-off zones in different locations aside from where the community would come in, so that you can segregate them during hours where school might be in session, and that might be a community use of the building. Or after school, you can close off the school portion of the building to where only the community's use portion of the school is available.

A good example locally here would be the Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Maryland, which is a large suburban boarding on urban area high school, well planned. It was broken down into learning communities. It integrates a lot of the natural strategies and mechanical strategies to create a building for faculty and staff to monitor the student flow within the building to see that there's a limited chance for conflict and so forth within the building.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** You know, I went to public schools, and it was a great experience for me. And my sons go to public school, and I want them to enjoy it equally. And so we want to create an environment where our kids can learn. We want them safe. But I worry about creating facilities that begin to look more and more like prisons. Metal detectors. What are your views about metal detectors? Is that something that makes sense? Maybe perhaps in urban areas we have a lot of gang activity. Perhaps that may be something to consider, but what are your thoughts generally on metal detectors.

**MR. KUBE:** Well, what we're looking at here is integrating the whole aspect of creating a safe and secure learning environment with what I call a healthy high performing school and balancing off keeping our children safe but affording them good learning spaces that really help the teachers do their job, and the kids do their job in terms of learning.

The mechanical types of strategies like metal detectors and so forth, you tend to see more in urban settings where there are chances of more of endemic violence. You would tend to find them in retro fitted buildings that are being upgraded and so forth where the site that the building is on doesn't allow for it to be physically changed to a large degree. And you've got very public access points that are harder to control, or that you've got activities in terms of gang related community activities that just—they need to have that type of intervention to have the secure entrance point to the school.

Personally I'm not in favor of them. And I'd like to not see a metal detector in the school. I think that where we send our children to school sends a message to them in terms of what we think of them. And where they learn should give you that feeling that you've had, Mr. Attorney General, of going to school, and that's part of the experience of learning. And I think the metal detector, although it serves a purpose, sends a negative message to our young people that this is what we think of you, even though we're sending you here to learn.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Doctor.

**DR. ELLIOTT:** I think it needs to be pointed out that the vast majority of school shootings take place outside of the building. So having that as a—at an entry point in the building is not going to avert very many of the school shootings. Only one out of five school shootings take place inside the building. The parking lot, the street in front of the school, these are the places around—athletic events, these are where most of the school shootings take place. So I also don't think the metal detector is going to be a very efficient way to cut down on school shootings.

Research also shows that it doesn't take very long for students to learn how to circumvent the metal detector. So it's not a strategy I think that's a very good one.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Okay.

**SHERIFF WEGENER:** So some of the rural schools like in my county, that would be kind of hard pressed too with the amount of funding that they receive. They would have a hard time being able to purchase some of those. Then you also have manpower. You have to have somebody man the metal detectors, and so you've got to be able to find somebody to do that. Surveillance cameras would be the same thing. You've got to find somebody that's got to sit in there and watch those cameras. So—

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** So what do we do?

**SHERIFF WEGENER:** Yeah. I think what we have to do is we still have those—we still have good programs in place though. We still have—like we have the Safe to Tell in Colorado. We have those programs that allow kids to take ownership of their facility. And I think that's probably the key is they have to take ownership of their facility. I think the teachers do. I think the community does. I think if we all take ownership of each one of our facilities, that's going to help us probably have a more secure facility.

Would it have stopped the round of active violence that I had at (Inaudible) King High School? I don't know. I mean obviously it didn't. And those would be things that we have to think about. But I think ownership in that facility by the community is just probably more key than anything.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Okay. Sheriff Dawsy, can you talk a little bit more about additional steps you've taken in your county to make the schools safer?

**SHERIFF DAWSY:** Yes, sir. I alluded a little bit to acronyms in our career field, STP, which is basically Safe School Inter-Agency Team program. This is a program that I think measures our communications within our profession. And I think that's what we're saying right here at the table.

There are great programs, many programs that are out there. But we that deal with the safety of our children, one of the core issues is that we have to communicate with each other. The program that we are putting in as a pilot program, we have about 16, 17 schools in my community, 10 are elementary, and then an alternative school, and then four middle schools and three high schools. We've hit each venue, high school, middle and elementary, with a real focus on the elementary school. And what we're trying to do there is we bring a core group of people that are involved in a child's life.

There's actually nine social, law enforcement, educational groups that come together. And we meet, the Executive Committee meets on a quarterly basis. The people that are at the school meet as needed. There is no barriers. They don't have to wait a week. They don't have to wait till Friday. It's based on the crisis or the issue that's at school, which gives them tremendous flexibility.

I alluded—and I'll just go from the law enforcement function because I think we're on the outskirts of everything that occurs many times in a child's life. But you know, when a child sees somebody, their mother especially, become a domestic and becomes a victim of domestic, that causes some major issues in that child's life. And a lot of times, that child goes under the radar. We do not know what occurred on Friday, Thursday, Tuesday, Wednesday night at that child's home. All we see is this young child come to school with some changes in their attitude. And mostly elementary school teachers, my mother-in-law and my cousin were all elementary school teachers for years, they see the changes. I mean you ask the teachers out there, and they'll truly be able to tell you, hey, there is something going on in this child's life.

That being said and through some of the training through Fox Valley, we were able to bring these core groups to a training program and then implement it where when something occurs in a child's home that we're called to, our deputies have—and are ordered and have the capabilities through a computer system to immediately contact that SRO so that on Monday morning when that SRO turns on his computer, they immediately know that that child who had an issue goes to their school, and that this individual really needs to be looked at.

Now that's an elementary issue. We bring that child in to see if he needs some—or she needs some sort of social services. But the real big picture is that we're communicating, you know, the intelligence that we were talking about. The intelligence and the information that we can share, I think is paramount in keeping our children safe.

It is our responsibilities as parents. I don't want to put it all on our shoulders, but we talked a little bit that the parents have to be involved in this process too. That when we find that the child has an issue, that we get them involved in their part of the mending basis.

And then what we do is we take this program and we try to implement the steps. And as we're implementing them, one of the key issues that I have found through 25 years of law enforcement is that we fail to tell each other what we're doing. I mean we're doing something for the child, but, you know, law enforcement--well, you know, I turned it over to the mental health facility or the centers. Or we turned it over to the school. Do you know what's happening. Well, no, we don't. And I think what happens here is that with this particular program, we follow the information from one stage to the other and hopefully through returning this child back to a successful student in our community. And that if we have an issue, if we truly have an issue with a child, that this child becomes a child of interest. And we talked about the confidentiality, and you never want to tag a child with a term. But in an environment of professionals where confidentiality is the key, we can use those terms to the benefit, not to the negative of the child. I think what we're hearing today is that, you know, there is programs in place.

But us, in our career field, I think there is an apprehension, sir, if I can say this, within certain school systems, law enforcement, social services, to share that information, that liability word is out there. And that liability word in our career field, we live in liability. We shouldn't be afraid of liability. We should embrace it and understand it. And we have to find ways, such as the memorandum of understanding that we understand we're going to be held accountable for this information. But it is paramount for the safety of our children and the future of our children that we break down those barriers and we move forward, and we build an environment that we in our profession share information, sir.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Good point, thank you. Mr. White, you've served both as a county prosecutor and now as a United States Attorney. What roles do you see for the federal, state and local law enforcement officials?

**MR. WHITE:** Well, sir, I believe firmly that based upon everything you hear from these experts around this table that the real function of law enforcement at all those levels is to facilitate partnerships. Now facilitating partnership with the school system, with the broader community, all the agencies that we talked about, the court system, the mental health, the Emergency Management officials, the Emergency Medical officials, all of those folks have to come together and form a plan on how to address safe schools in their jurisdictions.

Some jurisdictions are easier than others. Sheriff Dawsy has one school system in his county. The county that I came from had two urban school systems and multiple smaller systems. Each one of those systems has to have a plan, and we have to work with them. Each one of those school buildings has to have a plan as to how they're going to address safety in that building because each one is unique.

It's an overwhelming task that we have to either form task forces like we do for terrorism investigations, or we do for drug investigations, to work with schools in those jurisdictions. We can do that. We can bring those communities together. And it's going to take the school superintendents to pick up the phone and call their county sheriff, to call their county prosecutor. If they haven't heard from them in a while, they need to call them. The same goes the other way, the prosecutors and the sheriffs. This dialogue that we talked about is crucial I think to making these programs work.

What are the constraints of the court system? We talk about the constraints of the schools. What are the constraints in the court systems to deal with these children that are referred there, whether it's the civil end in Children's Services, or the criminal end in the Juvenile Justice system.

There are a lot of resources obviously that the Department of Justice brings to this table as well in terms of addressing these issues.

The Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms in tracing firearms, in bringing to the table the issue of where are these children getting the guns, and how do we prevent guns from getting into the wrong hands. They have obviously training that they do for bomb threats, for instance. The FBI is assembling statistics on school-based violence, incidents of school-based violence. That doesn't stop at public schools, but it goes on to universities and the level of violence that we've seen on campuses on occasion. We experienced that in Cleveland.

So the issue is develop a crisis plan. Law enforcement needs to be intricately involved in that in every school.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Do you think that post-Columbine students are more willing to come forward to the law enforcement community and report threats?

**MR. WHITE:** I think the answer to that is yes, but it's a qualified yes from my experience, and that is we have to create an environment in the schools that encourages that habit. Some schools are better at that than others.

There are a lot of programs that deal with students. We had a program called Youth for Youth. There are others. I think there's a student here at this conference that's going to talk about what happens there. But the issue is how do the students in that school, in each school, define the problems in that school and come up with goals and procedures on how they're going to solve that problem. Is it bullying? Is it respect? Is it drugs? Is it alcohol? Is it guns? All those things are different in different schools, and their programs have to be unique for that school. But they have to have a culture of safety that encourages the students to come forward with that information and the intelligence that we talked about.

Secondly, and also importantly, once you have that in place, the crisis plans and all those things, I think we need to mention, and we talked about this informally a little bit, about the opportunities to exercise those plans. Don't put them on a shelf and forget about them. They need to be brought off that shelf. They need to be dusted off. They need to be reviewed, and obviously that's something that law enforcement and those partnerships we talked about has a crucial role in seeing that that happens. And it's not happening as it should in most schools. And when the crisis happens, that's not the time to figure out all the details of how that plan works in that school.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** And this is a very important point. I heard Secretary Spellings this morning emphasize that there is such a turnover in schools. Administrators come and go, teachers come and go, families come and go. And you just can't assume that people know what to do in response to a particular threat or in response to a shooting. These plans are very, very important, but they are absolutely worthless if they are not exercised, if people don't know what those plans are intended to do. Do you think we're safer today in our schools?

**MR. WHITE:** We're definitely safer, but as you say, teachers come and go, so do students. And the sheriff talked about pushing programs down and up from elementary school to the high school. Some of these programs need to be pushed down from the high school to the junior high schools, which, you know, that whole issue of bullying and respect, there's a role to be played by the older students in helping the younger students come along. And that's part of that transition in students as well.

**SHERIFF DAWSY:** Sir, if I could just make a comment on practicing of the plans. We have plans, and we found after Columbine that, you know, that we needed to have many different plans to deal with a different type of results. And I know there's turnover. But, you know, I charge my career field that people that have a relationship like I do with my superintendent where we're first name basis. And our core key is that, you know, to keep our child or children safe within our school system. I think it's our responsibility. It's not our children's responsibility, or our parents' responsibility. It is the educators, the staff at the schools, the administration of the schools, and law enforcement itself to make sure those plans are exercised.

Case in point with us, we have lock-down drills, just like we have fire drills, with all the new teachers, And it's done on a continuous basis. Different schools, different time lines, but it's done several times a year so that we understand how to lock down a school, and what the law enforcement personnel is going to look for and what the school's responsibility is on the lock-down.

And then actually you can do table-tops or actual deployment of a plan. Of course maybe when the students are not there so we don't unnerve all the children. But I really think that is the key because when it happens, it is not the time to react. We need to know as a unit to when one responds to a particular scene, and we've all had scenes in our schools, some, you know, a lot less traumatic than a true shooting, But when a plan goes as well, it is much more systematic and the approach is much more successful. And

it's our responsibility. Nobody else's. We need to put that on our shoulders. It's no excuse for not implementing and practicing a plan. All it takes is a phone call and some action.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Okay.

**MS. ROONEY:** Also I'd like to add I think all of us do realize that practice does make perfect with a plan in keeping them alive and keeping them renewed year after year. And with that in mind, the Secret Service currently has underway in production an interactive threat scenario CD so that it will allow—it has two hypothetical school-based threat scenarios, and it will allow school Threat Assessment teams to be faced with this hypothetical scenario. And it stimulates discussion in what would you do in your role as a prosecutor, and what would you do in your role as an educator. So you can see how people's roles would play out. And you can keep doing this and keep it alive and keep it vibrant.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Sheriff Wegener, two weeks ago you were on the scene of a shooting in Bailey, Colorado. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

**SHERIFF WEGENER:** Going back to their plan, we had just exercised our lock-down procedures back in August, going through what would happen, what it's going to look like when the SWAT team enters the building just so that everybody has an idea of what's going to transgress.

Of course, you know that on September 27th, we get the call that there's a man with a gun inside a classroom at the high school. This call, as I'm in Bailey and I first hear it going over the radio, I immediately think that it's a drill and somebody forgot to tell me. But then as I hear more and more of the officers and the strain in their voices, I realize that it was in fact happening.

You know, we get on the scene. We have a thing called active shooter, and most of the agencies in Colorado have been trained on active shooter, and that is that the first three officers that arrive on the scene immediately go to threat. Wherever the intel has told them via that—the secretary, or via another student, or what information they have gotten, they go right there so we can pin the threat down.

This in a post-Columbine designed school, they were able to go right to Room 206 and pin the shooter down right there. This gave the ability for the rescue team that I was on and some of the other officers to go in and evacuate all of the other children out of the school.

This we had planned. And we talked about the lock-down. We had the little cards that slid underneath the door that let us know if there was a problem in that room, or if it was a safe room. They also then—the teacher then, when we know it's a safe

room, were able to go in, unlock it, say, all right, everybody follow me and go this direction.

It's an—involvement in the school I think helps because when I got there, the look of relief on the teachers' face and on the students' face—oh, the sheriff's here, and they listened right what I said. All right, you guys need to go in this direction. We got everybody out, and then of course, I had to get into negotiations with this individual for the release of six of the seven hostages as you have probably all know now by the outcome. Unfortunately I couldn't get the last hostage out, the last two, and we had to use the Jefferson County SWAT team to make entry into the building—excuse me, to the room, and unfortunately Emily was shot.

Negotiations had broken down after he released the fifth hostage. He wouldn't talk to us anymore and just said that everything would be—something would happen at 4 o'clock. At the beginning, when negotiations were first going, he kept on alluding to a backpack that was supposedly had C-4 in it. And never did elaborate anymore on the backpack. Through the interviews we had with all the hostages, he had the backpack set aside. He never would go over to the backpack according to the hostages, but that they all saw it. So we had to keep that threat. To me it was pretty real. Then listening to the hostages as they were debriefed talk about the, you know, molesting that they had endured. It was the decision that I had made after listening to all that intel that we had to go in and do something to get those girls out of there.

Like I say, I still think our school is safe. I still think that we had a safe school. I think that we had great interaction. We have parents that have come in. We have law enforcement that's in there. I think this is just one of those times when an individual is able to get in, talking to the other kids. They thought he was one of the parents and didn't think much else of it. But it's a very sad event and one that I take responsibility for.

But I think the lessons that, as I told the Attorney General, that I hope to get from this is just an ability to understand all the facets of everything that has gone on, listen to the experts and maybe avert anything like this from ever happening again. You know, it's a terrible tragedy, and we're not supposed to lose our kids at school.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Thank you, sheriff. Well, with that, we have some time now for some questions from the audience. I want to thank the panelists—

**MALE VOICE:** This question I guess is addressed to the entire panel. In an essay released earlier this year by investigators of the 1999 Columbine High School massacre, 18-year-old gunman Eric Harris mused that students can get weapons into school too easily, and they have too much access to weapons outside of school. Fifteen-year-old Eric Hainstock pried open his family's gun cabinet, took two weapons to Weston High School in Wisconsin and murdered his principal.

As the five innocent girls in Lancaster County were being executed, two schools in the Las Vegas area were placed in lock-down after a student was spotted with a firearm. And just yesterday, a 13-year-old student took a replica of an AK-47 from his family's home and was stopped from massacring his classmates only after the firearm jammed.

It seems Eric Harris was correct in identifying the common denominator in the rash of school shootings in the last week. What can our legislatures and this administration do to halt the proliferation of these weapons in our schools and on our streets, especially in light of the expiration of the federal assault weapons ban?

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Do you want to take that? Well, let me just say that obviously kids should not have access to weapons, and there shouldn't be weapons in our school. And that's been the position of the President since his days as governor when he really championed that legislation to make schools gun-free zones.

I think what we can do at the law enforcement community, of course, is ensure that those who break the law are in fact prosecuted. And the level of prosecution related to gun crimes is up something like 62 to 65 percent since George Bush became President.

We have a program called Project Safe Neighborhood, which is really focused on prosecuting violent gun crime. And it's been successful, and obviously it's something that we'll continue to focus on. And there's been a lot of money spent on trying to curb that kind of violence, and we're all obviously very concerned about the guns that make their way into our schools.

**SHERIFF DAWSY:** If I can just answer that? That's a great question, sir. I'm not sure that anybody up here is going to be able to give you a thorough answer to that.

I truly believe that we can't legislate safety. We can set some blocks in place that can protect our children in school. I made a comment when I first had a chance to talk to the Attorney General that I think the communications is the key. In the state of Florida, guns and weapons are very accessible. And the fact is that bad things are going to happen from time to time, and that means a child bringing a gun to campus.

If we use that as a guiding light, then my position is I as a law enforcement officer and the superintendent of my schools have to work together to develop programs in place that when those isolated issues do occur, that one, we have some sort of communications mecca in place. That is, that we have developed a relationship with our students, whether it be a teacher, whether it be a law enforcement officer, that they know where to go because I think a lot of times you look at--they don't know who to go talk to. Who do I bring this information to. That to me has always been a key and so has my superintendent, Sam Hemmel, that we develop that relationship so the child needs to go, so that we can avert, and we do. We avert probably more tragedies than what tragedies do occur. Not the fact that I think any tragedy should happen, but I really think we have to develop that relationship from the elementary school level. And that is a different

venue than a lot of SRO programs are. We need to develop that confidence in children, getting programs in place that will safeguard our children while they're in the schools and understand the dangers. And then as they grow older, they have the confidence in law enforcement and the school system that they can take that information and do something with that information to protect themselves and other children.

**DR. ELLIOTT:** The primary prevention strategy there is really to deal with the motivation issue to take away the desire that anyone would have to take a gun to school. We know a little bit about that. We know that when there's a lot of bullying going on at school, or when the student perception is that the rules are not applied uniformly to everyone. It's under those circumstances that a kid is most likely to take the gun to school because he feels, or she feels that they have to protect themselves because the school is not protecting them.

So if we can create a normative climate in the school where the view is that everybody is respected, that the rules apply uniformly to everyone in the school, and the issues of bullying are dealt with appropriately, then we take away the typical motivation for carrying a gun to school. And that's the best prevention strategy.

**SHERIFF WEGENER:** Thinking of your question, I was trying to think back to the rural area I'm from. The answer to your question is relatively easy. You just need to change society. Right?

I went to school. When I was in school, I had a 30-30 rifle in the bed of my pickup truck, but I never thought about shooting anybody with it. We took knives. Boys have buck knives on their belts. But we never thought of stabbing anybody with it. We always knew that to deal with something, you had to deal with it intelligently. Either you got in a fight or what not, but that was it. It was over. Has that changed? Yes, dramatically. And that's--

I think Dr. Elliott's right. We have to figure out how to change everybody's thinking. And that's--the gun thing's a terrible thing.

**MALE VOICE:** If I could just comment real quick. As a student--I am 19 years old. I have grown up and gone to high school in the climate that we live in today. Our's is a post-September 11th world. Our's is a world where we've been exposed to violent video games, mass media, even my own California governor did a lot to perpetuate those kinds of messages.

What kind of society--we're in a society--I mean it's true. What kind of society that we live in today is far different from one where weapons could be taken to school. They could be put into the back of a pickup truck. And having survived through with the Columbine high school shooting at a time when I was going to be entering high school, I'm not sure that a request for a society to change is enough.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Any response to that? If not, we'll go to the next question. Yes, sir.

**MR. BRANDOM:** Good morning. My name is Robert Brandom, and I teach in the D.C. public school system. And I want to pick up on something that was mentioned earlier about the teacher in the classroom knowing that the students is having a bad day because something may have happened at home.

What I would like the panelists to comment on is how do you separate the culture and society of the school from the culture and society within the community? Schools are in the community. If the community sees violence and deals with it on a daily basis with shootings and stabbings and domestic violence and robberies and gangs, how does a young child separate from that on a daily basis when they come to school when all the children in the same neighborhood go to the same school?

And I think one picture we forget in trying to deal with student behavior is that they see adult behavior, and they pick up on what we do and what we say. You turn on the television. It isn't the issue of violence on television as much as also we forget about the violence in our conversations, in our debates. Some of the political commentaries by talk-show hosts is just as violent as some of the things that happen in the community because it shows disrespect for one another. And I think that's the key element. Our conversation needs to tone down to the point that adults start respecting one another and then children will see that they need to start respecting each other because children don't have much respect for adults because adults are not respecting one another.

**MR. WHITE:** I would just say this about your issue. There's no question that there's a relationship between violence in schools and violence in neighborhoods. I think that's been well established, and Dr. Elliott has talked about that before. What we all need to do I think is be more pro-active. That's where law enforcement and the schools are working together now more closely in being pro-active on those kinds of issues.

And I will add this. Law enforcement sees the element of prevention now. They get that part I think more so than they did 10 years ago or 15 years ago. We're all working together for that prevention piece.

The neighborhoods, if you consider what's out there in terms of the most violent people versus the masses of folks that live obviously in the neighborhoods where you teach are law abiding. They want their children to go to school. They want to be safe. There's an element there that you can work with. There's an element there that needs to be dealt with sternly by law enforcement. So there's a law enforcement piece. There's a prevention piece, and we all need to work together to advance that cause that I know you believe in so firmly.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Thank you, Greg. Next question.

**MS. VAN SICKLE:** Good morning. My name is Lisa Van Sickle. I'm with the International Coalition for Drug Awareness, and I'm from Rowerton Township in the state of New Jersey.

I have or had a child who was violent and suicidal. She was violent and suicidal due to the anti-depressant, Paxil. I took my crusade to the White House. The President responded. It went to A. J. Jass. We've had Congressional hearings. The FDA is now under deep scrutiny. I want to know when are we going to hold the pharmaceutical industry responsible for putting anti-depressant medications on the market that cause our children to become violent, suicidal, and in the majority of cases, homicidal.

I hear about Columbine all the time. What is not known to the public is that Eric Harris, over the course of a year, was on a drug, Luvox, and it was increased four times. We know these drugs cause violence. We know they cause homicide. What are you going to do about it? We have medication guides that are not being distributed to the classroom, to physicians, to parents. How can we properly monitor our children without a defined regulation on how these med guides will be distributed? Thank you.

**DR. ELLIOTT:** I can't really answer your question as to when, you know, that's going to happen. I guess I do want to comment that what the evidence suggests that those anti-depressant drugs increase the risk for violence and for suicide. So when you talk about causes, I want to be sure we understand what we mean by that. And that is that it increases the risk. It is true that Eric Harris was using Luvox, but it's also true that Dylan was not.

**MS. VAN SICKLE:** But if you look at the medication guide, and I will be more than happy to provide a copy to you, the FDA says to monitor a child for agitation, aggression, violent behavior, changes in mood and behavior. Agitation and aggression, that's bringing a knife to school. Agitation and aggression is beating up another child. I lived the nightmare. I know how violent and suicidal a child can become due to the side effect of a medication. My daughter didn't have depression. She had Lyme disease.

You need to look at the issue with 11 million prescriptions being prescribed, and if one out of 50 children will become violent or suicidal on these medications, we need to take a more serious look at the issue. Thank you.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Ma'am, what I'd like to do—I know that the Secretary of Health, Human Services would be very interested in this issue, if he's not already looking into this area. So perhaps later on, you and I can have a discussion, and we can see—give him more information about what's being done.

**MS. VAN SICKLE:** I would love that because I brought some information to you, and Mr. Gonzales, thank you very much for your time.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Thank you. Yes, sir.

**MR. SHIRER:** Good morning. My name is Jim Shirer (sp), and I'm associated with the Institute for Strategic Exploration which is based on futurist Joe Barker's work. I'm a futurist and an educator. I'm also a resident of Wisconsin, the site of two of the most recent issues.

When I originally stood up to ask a question, I think it was going to be directed towards perhaps both Dr. Elliott and Ms. Rooney, but Sheriff Dawsy also mentioned something a couple of seconds ago that relates. In the tragic death of the high school principal, a recent interview with the grandparent and pastor of the young man who committed the violent act stated that he just didn't think through the consequences of his decision to carry that out.

We believe that one of the major issues of prevention, in addition to one of the things mentioned by the panel concerning empowering more and more students to report on incidents, is the basic thinking skills of everybody involved in the process, in being aware of the short term and long term consequences of their decisions. We've actually been developing some simulations related to issues like drug use and binge drinking among youth to make them more aware of the consequences of their decision.

And I'm interested in hearing, based on the positive results we've gotten, probably best summarized very briefly by a student coming up to me one day and saying I've never had an opportunity to think this way in any classroom I've been in. This is completely different. How we can address the prevention of incidents like that at that level before they occur.

**SHERIFF DAWSY:** One of the things that we have in place in our community is called a Focus program, very similar I think to what you're talking about, maybe not on the same level. It is our drug education, gang violence, and the rest of the gamut. It's filtering out crime united with students. It was developed by my SRO's and our curriculum specialist to where we can look at a global issue. We could also look at the local issue, which I think is extremely important factors that affect our children in our school system.

That being said, our SRO's, our School Resource officers, excuse me— acronyms are part of our career field—our School Resource officers do exactly what you're talking about. They put the kids in mock scenarios, trying to get them to look at the big picture. We focus on the 5th grade level, which to me is a good age to really work on so that they can focus further. And we are seeing some benefits, but, you know, it's a new program that we put in place. It's about four, maybe five years old now at the most, and we're still watching the relationship.

In our community, we have found a few guns. Most of the time it's young men bringing pocket knives to school. So maybe we are having an impact. We just haven't seen it.

**DR. ELLIOTT:** I would just like to confirm what you're saying because I believe that is part of the problem. And we do have some alcohol binge prevention programs which utilize that same strategy which look like they're quite effective.

One of the problems is that the current use of interactive video games, for example, helps to break that connection between action and consequence. And so part of the problem—I think we know that exposure to television violence, to film violence and to those interactive video games is causally linked to violent behavior. It's not the strongest link, but it clearly is there. And I think it's because of the de-sensitization which takes place with watching killing after killing after killing, and it does break down that connection between the behavior and the consequence. That's a serious problem.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL GONZALES:** Ladies and gentlemen, I'm sorry, but we are out of time for this panel. If there are additional questions, I'm hopeful you'll have the opportunity to ask other panelists who will be presenting later.

Before we take a short break, please join me in thanking our panelists for this morning's session.

(Applause.)

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