

As Prepared for Delivery

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Drug Enforcement Administration
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I can't tell you how excited I am to be here today.

On behalf of the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Department of Justice, thank you for the opportunity to be part of this Solutions Summit, and for including DEA, as together we seek solutions to the opioid and drug crisis throughout Utah.

You've heard a great deal over the years, and you'll hear more today, about drug education and treatment, but possibly not as much about enforcement. But enforcement is equally important: it serves alongside education and treatment as the third pillar in any successful, comprehensive solution to the opioid epidemic that's devastating communities across our country, including here in Utah.

As difficult a subject as drug abuse is, it's sometimes more difficult to talk about enforcement. This is, I think, because Americans naturally want to treat the victims of drug abuse with compassion and kindness. However, when it comes to drug traffickers, particularly leaders of the large-scale trafficking networks that DEA specifically targets, we find ruthless gangs and remorseless criminals willing to poison our communities for profit.

They never give a second thought to their victims, the devastation their poison spreads, and the violence that often follows the communities they invade.

We must show compassion for victims of drug addiction, and get them the help they need. As Attorney General Jeff Sessions has said, the Department of Justice and DEA aren't focused on users, but on the criminal organizations that supply them with deadly drugs.

Getting dangerous drugs off our streets and out of our neighborhoods is necessary to achieve the objectives of DEA's 360 program here in Utah. This strategic approach is a partnership: a partnership where we work hand-in-hand to empower your community to develop and implement a sustainable plan of action. With the 360 program we can, and we will change the trajectory of this community, and set a new course. The rally we just saw is part of that plan being put into action.

Effective, coordinated, and professional enforcement is a critical element of 360. Enforcement is an important bridge to professional educators, prevention experts, and the recovery community for a number of important reasons.

First, except for those who have experienced the consequences of drug abuse themselves, no one has sacrificed or seen the immediate, devastating impact of drug abuse more than law enforcement and our first responders.

First responders are actual witnesses: not just in courtrooms, but in working with the medical community, and in talking with young Americans about drugs and the important choices they have to make.

First responders are credible experts who not only see the effect of drugs on the minds and bodies of users, but also know the direct connection between drugs and the support they provide for violent gangs and criminal cartels.

Law enforcement can also serve as advocates for those who would benefit from drug courts and treatment. This kind of intervention has saved countless lives.

Second, I firmly believe that the more we reduce access to drugs, the fewer drugs there are to be abused, and fewer people will use them. Quite simply, you can't become addicted to drugs if those drugs aren't available. With aggressive law enforcement against drug traffickers, we are actively taking drugs off the streets.

This keeps people from becoming addicted, and keeps them from dying. When we increase enforcement, we reduce the amount of drugs available in our schools and elsewhere, empowering communities to create drug free spaces.

Preventing addiction by reducing the supply of illicit drugs is not just wise policy: it's also compassionate. It's a measurable, effective, and an efficient investment of resources.

Third, it's important that drug traffickers know they cannot break the law with impunity. Drug trafficking is related to other crime: drug traffickers that poison our communities constitute a fundamental assault not only on our citizens, but on the rule of law. All that we as a community and as a country seek to accomplish: from safer streets; greater educational achievement; a prosperous, productive economy; and better health outcomes for ourselves and our families, are put at risk by the presence of drug traffickers.

I'm very pleased to see that the DEA 360 program here in Utah is already producing results:

- It has created incredible, tangible commitments by community leaders at the local, state, and federal level. This includes Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes; House Speaker Greg Hughes; and Senators Mike Lee and Orin Hatch.
- DEA has been front-and-center in the development of the Utah Opioid Task Force, which is pursuing new and innovative legislation; providing criminal prosecutors dedicated to convicting drug traffickers; and enhancing demand reduction and opioid awareness education efforts.
- DEA has participated in neighborhood town hall events across all of Utah's 29 counties.

- And there is so much more, from the DEA Youth Dance Program; to DEA Takeback Day, which will collect thousands of pounds of prescription drugs across Utah on Saturday, October 27th.

The bottom line is that stopping drug abuse before it starts isn't just the responsibility of education and prevention programs: it takes all of us to make people and communities whole again. Effective law enforcement has a critical, leading role to play in achieving this outcome, and DEA will be there, extending a hand to our education and treatment partners, and bringing drug traffickers to justice.

I am convinced that when we come together as a community the power of the American people becomes a force that no criminal cartel, no drug trafficking organization, and no drug can stop.

Thank you for everything you're doing; and thank you for believing in the power of change and of community, as together we seek and find solutions to these challenging problems.

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