



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY
Washington, D.C. 20503

February 18, 2010

Dear Friends:

I am honored to be the national keynote speaker at the Fourth Annual NOPE National Candlelight Vigil to take place on October 28, 2010, during Red Ribbon Week. As part of this effort, I ask that you join us by hosting or participating in a NOPE Candlelight Vigil in your community to help to raise awareness about the profound dangers of abusing drugs and alcohol.

Sadly, most Americans have witnessed first-hand how drug or alcohol abuse can rob families and friends of people they love, and can harm the health and prosperity of entire communities. In my 37-year career in law enforcement, I became all-too-familiar with the tragic consequences of substance abuse. Now, as Director of National Drug Control Policy, I am devoted to reducing drug abuse and improving the health and safety of all Americans.

It is estimated that our Nation loses more than 22,000 people annually to drug overdose deaths, and many million more seek emergency medical care due to drug use or overdose. And yet, Americans continue to abuse drugs, including powerful prescription drugs, at alarming rates.

There is no "silver bullet" to stop drug use, but education and awareness are powerful tools. Recognizing that preventing drug use before it begins is an effective way to build healthy and safe communities, President Obama has made prevention a key component of the national strategy to reduce drug use and related consequences. Community awareness and engagement are the cornerstones of this effort.

When you and your peers organize and address drug issues at the local level, you can strengthen your communities, you can reduce drug use, and you can and will save lives. Participating in a vigil can help raise awareness about a serious but preventable problem, educate those at risk, and show support for families touched by substance abuse.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Gil Kerlikowske".

R. Gil Kerlikowske
Director