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Foreword

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Foreword

Congressman Robert E. "Bud" Cramer, Jr.

In reviewing the contents of this book, I was struck by how far we have come as a nation in addressing child abuse and neglect. I was also struck by how much we have left to do.

In my work as a juvenile prosecutor and elected District Attorney, I saw first hand the complex nature of these cases and the need to develop specialized units of investigators and prosecutors to respond to allegations of abuse. As a District Attorney, I had the privilege of starting the nation's first Children's Advocacy Center. Later, as a United States Representative, I championed the cause of children by marshalling congressional support for both my National Children's Advocacy Center in Huntsville, Alabama, and the National Children's Alliance, a coalition of Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) from across the nation that is headquartered in Washington, DC.

As a result of these reforms, countless children are interviewed sensitively, in child-friendly environments, by professionals skilled in conducting these interviews. As noted in one of the articles of this volume, there is a tremendous amount of research documenting effective interviewing practices. Our nation's Children's Advocacy Centers are dedicated to ensuring that all children are interviewed consistent with the best practices.

The investigation and prosecution of these cases has also improved tremendously in recent decades. This improvement is attributable in no

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small measure to the work of the National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse and other programs of the American Prosecutors Research Institute. These and other training initiatives have made a difference on the front lines.

Despite these and other reforms, more remains to be done. We need to improve the mandated reporting system. We need to make forensic interview training available to every front line professional in the United States. We need to improve the training we give child protection professionals at the undergraduate and graduate levels. We need to continue to research prevention initiatives and implement those programs that truly make a difference in the lives of children. We also need to involve the faith community in our prevention efforts. We need to make sure that vertical prosecution is the norm in every community. The need for these and other reforms is also discussed at length in this volume.

This volume's lead article, *Unto the Third Generation*, argues that if our nation commits itself to the task we can virtually eliminate child abuse over the course of three generations. Although I am sure each of us hopes to accomplish this goal more quickly, the timeline is not as important as the goal itself. Simply put, we must, in every community in this country, work ceaselessly toward the end of child abuse.

President Kennedy once told a story of a boy who tossed his hat over a wall so that he would have no choice but to follow. With the publication of this volume, we have tossed our hat over an important wall in the fight against child abuse and we too have no choice but to follow. It is my fondest hope that the reforms proposed in this volume will not only come to pass but that this publication will spur child protection professionals everywhere to engage in a meaningful dialogue that will produce additional ideas for improving our child protection system and speeding the day when child abuse no longer exists.

To this end, let us begin the climb.