Janet Reno became a household name at the turn of the twenty-first century when she became the first woman to be appointed attorney general of the United States. Her appointment, by President Bill Clinton, was significant, but even more important was the way she handled national crises such as the Waco siege, President Clinton's impeachment, and determining the fate of Cuban child Elían González. Judith Hicks Stiehm’s latest publication, *Janet Reno: A Life*, is a comprehensive, chronological account of Janet Reno’s life. Stiehm does an excellent job of defining each of the three crises and the role Reno played in each. She also effectively describes the impact Reno’s decisions had on her favorability rating among the public. The handling of these issues prove that Reno was an incredibly efficient federal official of the time.

Stiehm’s biography follows Reno from her wild days in Miami, where the Reno house had many animals and few rules, to Cornell University and Harvard Law, back to Miami for her career (she eventually became Florida’s first female state attorney), and all the way to Washington, DC, as attorney general. In following her life in this manner Stiehm shows how the two pillars of Reno’s childhood—“1) tell the truth and 2) be kind” (p. 2)—were fundamental principles by which she lived her life. These lessons inculcated by her mother were important to Reno for the remainder of her life and are demonstrated through her actions, even if some might criticize her social skills. Stiehm takes the two themes of Janet Reno remaining painfully honest and kind and interweaves them through each part of this biography. The book ends with a touching description of her life after she lost her battle with Parkinson’s disease.

Few complete biographies on Reno are available. This makes Stiehm’s work all the more valuable as she shows why Reno was such an important figure to feminist and federal history. However, there are many instances in *Janet Reno: A Life* where Stiehm describes the many individuals she deems important to Reno’s life, be they close and extended family, friends, colleagues, or ac-
quaintances. While the people in Reno's life were important to her, the result of Stiehm's approach is an overwhelming amount of information about individuals that is not necessarily crucial to understanding Reno. Even though Reno cultivated many close relationships, she never married. Stiehm acknowledges the work Reno did for her state and her country without tying Reno's importance to her marital status.

Reno's work as state attorney general could largely be summed up as the legal protection of children and the innocent. She was reelected multiple times and her crusade for justice was a main reason. As the US attorney general Reno's work was most closely related to the three major crises of her time in the position. First, in Waco, Texas, the siege by the US government of a compound occupied by a cult ended in flames that caused many fatalities. This situation was thrust upon Reno as she entered office, and she received heavy criticism for the loss of lives. In addition, President Clinton's impeachment happened during Reno's time as attorney general. Even though he had appointed her to her position, Reno maintained her integrity by appointing an independent counsel to investigate Clinton's original business deals from his time as Arkansas governor. She saw herself as the country's lawyer, not the president's. Third, the fate of Cuban child Elián González became extremely controversial, especially in her hometown of Miami. The child and his mother fled communist Cuba, but the mother perished on the trip. Relatives took the child in, but his father remained in Cuba and wanted his child returned to him. After a lengthy public appeal, the child was denied asylum and Reno upheld the decision to return the child to his father. She felt this was the right decision for the family, but the negative impact this decision would have on Reno's career would be significant.

Being the first woman to hold the cabinet position of attorney general was no small feat as President Clinton had previously nominated two women who were not confirmed. Reno understood the significance of her appointment and assumed her role with dedication and integrity. Stiehm's biography attempts to show how Reno ended up in the position that she did, that she deserved it, and that she handled it with the utmost care. Stiehm accomplishes all of these goals, and readers will come away with a more holistic understanding of Janet Reno, one of the most notable female cabinet members of the late twentieth century.