

Hillary Clinton: Fighting for Common Sense Gun Safety Legislation

May 9, 2000

Today, at the Newspaper Association of America's Annual Convention, Hillary Clinton announced a series of common-sense gun safety measures that would help keep New York's families, communities and children safe. As we approach the Million Mom March on Mother's Day, Hillary announced that as Senator, she will advocate for licensing and registration of all new guns and their transfers, as well as a new proposal to better track guns.

Licensing and Registration. Hillary Clinton announced a proposal calling for the licensing and registration of all new handguns. Under this proposal, individuals seeking to buy a handgun should be required to obtain a photo license from their state of residence, and to present the license when they purchase a handgun. And states would issue a license only if the applicant has passed a Brady background check and shown proof of having passed a certified safety course exam. In addition, she proposed that every new handgun sale or transfer should be registered in a national registry. Licensing and registration work together to increase the oversight and accountability of gun owners, and to reduce the likelihood of misuse. Roughly 90% of New York's crime guns come from out of state, where gun control laws are more lenient. These legislative proposals will better control these out of state guns.

Ballistic Fingerprinting. Hillary Clinton will also champion at the federal level a new proposal to create a ballistic fingerprint for all new guns. This legislation would create a national database of the pattern of scratches left on a bullet that is unique to each gun - the fingerprint. This data could be used for comparison with bullets found at crime scenes, so that law enforcement could better track down those who are involved with crimes. The computer images of those bullets and casings would be downloaded into a national digitized computer database that state and local law enforcement could access. Those images would then be used by law enforcement officials attempting to trace the origins of guns used in crimes and they can get a running start on their investigations, enabling them to catch violent criminals quicker.

These proposals build on Hillary Clinton's advocacy for common sense gun safety:

Code of Conduct. Hillary Clinton has supported the initiative by Attorney General Spitzer and Secretary Cuomo to get localities to only buy guns from those who gun manufacturers who sign a code of conduct. This proposal uses market incentives because states and localities purchase a quarter of all guns sold to bring pressure on manufactures. Hillary also believes that all cities should join the lawsuits against manufacturers to ensure their products are safer.

Require child safety locks for guns: Child safety locks and other devices can reduce the unauthorized use of handguns, by a child at play or a teen looking to commit a crime. Hillary supports legislation that requires federally-licensed firearms dealers, manufacturers, and importers to provide a child safety lock or device with every gun they sell.

Ban Junk Guns: Hillary Clinton supports prohibiting the sale of Saturday night specials and other cheap guns that are less safe and are often used in crimes.

Hold adults responsible for child access to guns: Child Access Prevention (CAP) laws promote gun safety and responsibility by holding adults responsible if they allow children easy access to loaded firearms. According to a study published by the Journal of the American Medical Association, CAP laws help reduce fatal unintentional shootings by an average of 23%. The legislation would impose felony penalties on adults who knowingly or recklessly allow a child to have unlawful access to a gun that is later used to cause death or injury.

Limit handgun sales to no more than one per month: Hillary will fight for legislation that would crack down on gun trafficking by limiting handgun sales to any individual a maximum of one per month. Gun runners should not be able to circumvent Brady background checks, and employ "straw purchasers" -- or persons not prohibited from purchasing firearms -- to buy guns in bulk and divert them to the street.

Raise the age of the youth handgun ban to 21 years of age: Hillary also supports extending the provisions of the youth handgun ban to youth between 18 and 21 years of age.

Regulating Guns: Hillary Clinton also supports legislation to empower the Consumer Product Safety Commission to regulate guns. Because toy guns are more regulated than real guns, she believes the Commission should have the power to regulate faulty, unsafe guns.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Akron, Ohio)

Release

May 13, 2000

For Immediate

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT
ON THE MILLION MOM MARCH

Ohio Army National Guard Facility
North Canton, Ohio

10:35 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning everyone. I have just had the opportunity to meet this fine group of mothers who are leading Ohio's participation in Sunday's Million Mom March for common-sense gun safety laws. I want to thank them for their commitment, their determination and their courage. What they are doing is profoundly important.

Like millions of mothers all over America, they are outraged by the senseless acts of gun violence that continue to plague our communities, and they are determined to do something about it. Every day, nearly a dozen of our children are killed by guns. Twelve families suffer a wound that never heals. What is almost as senseless is the fact that Congress refuses to act on legislation that would prevent many of these shootings.

These moms will be marching in Washington and in more than 60 other cities on Mother's Day to say to Congress, enough is enough. It is unconscionable that over a year after Columbine, over ten months since they've had a chance to send me meaningful legislation, Congress still refuses to act.

Well, they can ignore my requests to move. They can ignore the evidence that common-sense prevention won't cost any law-abiding citizen a gun, but will save lives. But this Sunday, they will not be able to ignore the fact that the voices of more than 1 million moms across America will be demanding action.

The great sociologist Margaret Mead once said, "never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." The women who are organizing this march are such a group of thoughtful citizens. They understand they have to be in this for the long haul. They understand that they have a lot of work to do.

But the evidence is on their side. The arguments are with them. And the power is on the other side. The whole story of America is the story of bringing down established walls of power in the face of argument and evidence, and passionate commitment to liberty and to the dignity of individuals. That's what the Million Mom March represents. I'm honored to be here with them today, and again, I thank them for what they will be doing in Ohio.

Thank you.

Q Mr. President, do you think that the march will have the kind of impact that will break this

logjam and get some gun control legislation through this Congress?

THE PRESIDENT: The honest answer to that is, I don't know. But I think it will have a seminal impact in the nature of this debate, because for a very long time now, large majorities of the American people have been for common-sense prevention legislation that has nothing to do with infringing on the right to keep arms, to bear arms, to hunt, to sports shoot, to keep weapons in self-defense, but has everything to do with keeping guns out of the hands of criminals and children. Notwithstanding the fact that lopsided majorities of our people favor these specific measures, they don't pass because of the intensity, power and wealth of the organized opposition to it.

So I think what these folks are saying is, you know, we want to save more lives. We're not trying to take anything away from what those people legally have who disagree with us. But we don't intend to let them take away our chance for prevention and safety anymore. And that is the beginning of the shift in the balance of forces in our society. That's how change always occurs.

So if they stay at this, they will prevail, because the evidence is on their side, the human element is on their side, and because they're not trying to take anything away from the other people. All they're trying to do is to protect our society from criminal acts and from avoidable accidents.

There are lives at stake. I think they will prevail. I hope they will prevail this year. I hope we will be able to prevail upon the leaders of the conference to meet and work again. But even if they don't win this battle, they'll win over the long run, because they are galvanizing public opinion around specific reforms that will make America a better place, and will give a lot of kids their lives.

Q Mr. President, a \$300,000 grant was given out to Smith and Wesson to do research on smart gun technology. Aren't some folks who see that as a pay-off to that company for signing -- What do you see as the status of that --

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think first of all, Smith and Wesson did a good thing in making this agreement. And I think it's very -- if you look at what they, what did they agree to do? They agreed to attach child safety locks; they agreed to make internal child safety lock mechanisms on their guns as soon as they could do so technologically, which could not be dismantled by the kids; and to work on smart gun technology, which would enable guns to be fired only by the adults who lawfully own them.

They agreed to -- this is perhaps most important in the short-run -- they agreed to change the way they market and distribute their guns to avoid that relatively small number of dealers who sell a very high percentage of the guns that go to people who use them in crimes. Now, I would think that that would have been well-received by everybody. But, instead, the other gun manufacturers and their allies have subjected Smith & Wesson to withering, withering criticism.

But the answer to your question is, no, I don't think it'll be seen as a pay-off, because it's nowhere near as much money as it will cost them, given the reaction of the rest of the gun industry to what they're trying to do. And we have to have someone in the industry help us with this research; just by the nature of it, it has to be done. And I can assure you, there was never any quid pro quo or discussion of it. This all came up later. We need to have some allies in the gun industry who really do believe that prevention is an important part of a safe future for America.

And I hope that Smith & Wesson will keep all the components of the agreement they made. They have certainly paid an enormous price for doing it. I mean, it's truly been breathtaking to see the reaction against them by the other gun manufacturers and their allies.

Yes, sir?

Q Mr. President, is there room for any compromise in this legislation? And if so, in what

area?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, let me give you an example of what I -- what we've got before the Congress right now, I think we can work out language on the child trigger locks. I would hope that we could get a big majority for banning the import of large-capacity ammunition clips. Surely there is not a constituency for that. There has been absolutely no disruption whatever from our banning of assault weapons. But if you let them import these large capacity ammunition clips, then you can modify existing guns here and turn them into assault weapons.

The hang-up -- and this is interesting to me -- the hang-up is that the NRA is basically opposed to doing the background checks at gun shows unless they're Insta-checks. Now, Ohio is a big state, with a lot of large cities spread across the state, and then an awful lot of small towns and rural areas. Their argument is, a lot of these gun shows are held on the weekend -- you know, if somebody comes in and wants to buy a gun, it's a real hassle to wait three days for the background checks. Is there a way to work this out?

Well, here's my theory about it. Everybody who clears the Insta-check, let them buy the gun. Seventy percent of the people clear the Insta-check in a couple of minutes; 90-plus percent within a day, same day as the gun show occurs. But of the less than 10 percent who don't clear it, their rejection rate, because of a problem in their background -- principally, a criminal problem -- is 20 times higher than the 90 percent of the people that do clear.

So what we've been unwilling to do so far is to say if we don't clear -- see, what the NRA position is, if they don't clear in a day, we ought to give that last 9 percent or 8 percent or however many -- they ought to be able to take the guns home, even if they don't clear within a day. And my position is, why would we defend a population that's less than 10 percent of the total, that's more than 20 times likely to have committed a crime and be ineligible to get a gun, than the rest of the 90 percent?

So it looks to me like we could work an agreement that covers the rest of the 90 percent, and then on the 9 percent, it seems to me it's quite important to do that. And -- you know, let me tell you, that would -- even that is a compromise from what would be the optimal, and here's why. Suppose a custody order, or a stop order, is listed in a domestic dispute that's very violent, on a Friday afternoon. It can't possibly be in anybody's computer yet. If you let the Insta-check control that, then a lot of people will get cleared -- not a lot, but a small number that could be violent -- could be cleared anyway.

So our people, representing our position through Mr. Conyers from Michigan, have, I think, made quite a reasonable proposal. And I'm hoping that we'll keep working on it. I think if we just had to work it out in the House, we could probably do it. But right now, the Senate -- where, ironically, where we passed a stronger bill -- but Senator Hatch and the Senate conferees are essentially refusing to go forward with us on this.

So -- I didn't mean to give you too long and detailed an answer, but you need to know that what's so sad about this is I think we could do the child trigger locks; I think we could do the assault weapons ban. And I think -- it seems unbelievable to me that we would be hung up here on this background check at the gun shows in a way that affects less than 10 percent of the gun buyers, but they're 20 times more likely to have a problem in their background. It's very important that everybody understand that. If we could just get focused on that, I can't believe we couldn't figure out a way to work this out.

Now, there's much bigger opposition to what -- the larger legislative goals of the Million Mom March, but I think they're absolutely right. As you know, I favor -- for example, I think if somebody buys a handgun they ought to get a license, like a car license. It ought to be a photo ID license. It ought to show that they passed a background check, and that they passed a gun safety check -- just like you do when you get a car. That's what I think.

So I'd like to see the short-term goals resolved this year and I want them to keep on pushing, because there is so much we can do. We can make America the safest big country in the world and still have people out there hunting and sports shooting, even having weapons for protection if they thought they needed them in their homes. But we can't do it without more prevention.

Q Mr. President, what do you think of polls which suggest that support for gun restrictions are wavering among men, and they tend to be more sympathetic to --

THE PRESIDENT: If you read -- let me just say this. First, I agree with that. But I think we've got to put it into some perspective.

If you go back and look at the data from the Pew research survey, they do show that men, particularly men over 55, have been affected by the claims of the NRA and the advertising that the rights of legitimate gun owners are threatened. But they also show that a majority, a significant majority of the people, still respond that we need further gun control measures.

The real problem is whether you talk in general terms about gun control, or whether you talk in specific terms about closing the gun show loophole, banning large-capacity ammunition clips, imposing child trigger locks, or licensing gun owners -- if you give people the specifics, there are still 70 percent of the people with us, maybe more.

But the labeling fears -- because it scares people. I said the other day to our staff, I said, this is weird. That's why the people who oppose our position, they always want to talk about more gun control, and imply that the rights of hunters and sports people are threatened. And they use that label.

But, you know, when we talk about the speed limits on automobiles, or people having to get a license to drive their cars, or laws that require you to use your seat belts or put in the right kind of baskets, child safety restraint seats -- you know, all those things are laws. You want to drive a car, and you want to put your child in the car? They're all laws. Nobody talks about car control. And you have a constitutional right to travel, too, you know. The Supreme Court says you've got a constitutional right to travel. No one says car control is threatening our constitutional right to travel.

So I think that what we should do is, instead of having these label wars, we should calm down, lower the rhetoric and say, what is it that we have proposed? What is it that they are advocating? Would it make us safer? Would it prevent more crimes and more accidental deaths, and injuries? Does it infringe the Constitution?

My answer is, look at the facts of what they're advocating. Would it make us a safer country? Absolutely. Would it infringe the Constitution? Absolutely not. Therefore, we ought to do it. I think we just calm this down and look at the facts, we'll prevail.

Thank you very much.

END 10:50 A.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Akron, Ohio)

Embargoed For Release
Until 10:06 A.M. EDT
Saturday, May 13, 2000

RADIO ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE NATION

Ohio Army/National Guard Facility
Akron, Ohio

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. This weekend, Americans celebrate the first Mother's Day of the 21st century. For most of us, it's a happy occasion, a chance to thank the women who gave us life, cared for us as children, nurtured us into adulthood.

But for thousands of mothers and fathers whose children have been killed by gun fire, tomorrow will be a day of sad memories. Every day in America, nearly a dozen children are killed by guns and 12 families receive a wound that never heals. And every day in America millions of moms and dads watch their children walk out the door in the morning and wonder if they'll come home safe that night.

That's why the First Lady and I are giving our strong support to tomorrow's Million Mom March. Tens of thousands of mothers and others are marching in Washington and more than 60 other cities across our nation. They're saying, enough is enough. Congress must pass common-sense gun legislation to protect our children without constraining the rights of legitimate gun owners.

Many of the organizers have lost children of their own and other loved ones to gun fire. This past week, I met with some of them at the White House and heard their stories: a son shot while playing with neighbors in his own backyard in New York; a teenager shot at his front door by party crashers in Virginia; a daughter shot with four others by classmates at her Arkansas middle school; a young man shot by Illinois gang members who expected, just like on television, that he would get up and walk away.

These moms are finding in their fear and loss the strength to send a wake-up call across America. As a father, I was heartbroken by their stories. As an American citizen, I was inspired. They're saying gun violence touches us all, wherever we live, whatever the color of our skin, whether or not we have children. They remind us that the loss of a child is a loss for us all. And they know we have the power to do something about it.

We do have the power to teach our children the right values, to build strong communities, to crack down on those who use guns to commit crimes. But the key to our success in this, as in so many areas, has got to be more prevention, doing more to keep guns out of the hands of children and criminals in the first place. There is no reason why we can't do that.

The Million Mom March is calling on Congress to act on the common-sense gun legislation that has been before it for 10 months now. The bill wouldn't take away anybody's gun or make anyone miss a day during the hunting season. What it would do is to close the loophole that lets anyone buy a gun at a gun show without a background check. It would require child safety locks with all new handguns. And it

would ban the import of large capacity ammunition clips, which nobody is using for sport or self-defense, and which makes a mockery of our assault weapons ban.

I think the Million Mom March is already a success, before anyone takes the first step. These people are helping to lead a grassroots effort that has already put stronger laws in place in states like California, Massachusetts and Maryland. They're letting the gun lobby know it is no match for America's moms. But our nationwide fight won't be over tomorrow, no matter how many march. We have so much work still to do.

Throughout our entire history as a nation every movement for social progress, every step toward safety and justice for all has been fueled by the energy and effort of ordinary citizens. The Million Mom March is the latest successor to that great American tradition. If the moms stick with it, they will succeed, they will make America a safer, more humane nation. Helping to keep guns out of the wrong hands is a Mother's Day gift we can all be proud of.

Happy Mother's Day and thanks for listening.

END

Today, in his weekly radio address, President Clinton will pay tribute to the thousands of mothers nationwide who will celebrate Mother's Day and show their support for stronger gun laws by participating in the Million Mom March. The March, which will begin after a rally at the White House with the President and First Lady, will take place in Washington, D.C., and in nearly 70 communities across the nation. Tens of thousands of mothers, fathers, children and other supporters are expected to converge on the National Mall for the event, making it the largest gun safety rally in history. The President will commend the mothers for leading an unprecedented grassroots movement to push for common-sense gun laws that will reduce the tragic toll of gun violence in our nation, and he will urge them to continue their fight for a safer America for their children beyond Sunday's March.

MAKING THE VOICES OF AMERICA'S MOMS HEARD ACROSS THE NATION.

On Sunday, mothers and families from across the country will join in the Million Mom March, a grassroots effort to focus the nation's attention on the terrible cost of gun violence and on the steps that can be taken to save more lives. The March has been organized by a group of mothers from across America who have become outraged by the lack of action taken by Congress to protect their children from gun violence. Many of these mothers have suffered tragic personal losses because of gun violence; many others have been stirred to action by the fear that criminals and children can too easily get their hands on guns. Accordingly, a key focus of the March will be highlighting the fact that gunfire takes the lives of 12 children every day, and participants will urge Congress and policymakers nationwide to pass preventive measures that will keep guns out of the wrong hands.

URGING CONGRESS TO PUT THE SAFETY OF AMERICA'S CHILDREN FIRST.

For ten months - despite numerous gun tragedies at schools, workplaces, and even places of worship all across America - the Congress has refused to move forward on common-sense gun measures. During that time, an estimated 20,000 Americans have lost their lives in gun violence. The President has urged Congress to send him strong gun safety measures without delay, including provisions to close the gun show loophole; mandate child safety locks with every handgun sold; ban high capacity ammunition clips; bar the most violent juveniles from possessing firearms as adults; and hold adults accountable if they allow children easy access to deadly guns. The President has also proposed funding for "smart gun" research and development grants and a state-based licensing proposal that requires all new handgun purchasers to be trained in the proper handling and storage of firearms. And as part of his comprehensive gun violence reduction strategy, the President has also called on Congress to fund the largest national gun enforcement initiative in history. This \$280 million initiative would fund 500 new ATF firearms agents and inspectors; over 1,000 new federal, state and local prosecutors; expanded gun tracing and ballistics testing; and programs modeled on Richmond's "Project Exile" and Boston's "Operation Ceasefire." Pointing out that states and communities across the country are moving ahead on common-sense gun measures, the President will urge Congress to stop its stall tactics and send him a gun safety bill he can sign now.



Ruby Shamir
05/12/2000 04:29:20 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Brenda B. Costello/WHO/EOP@EOP
cc: Heather H. Howard/OPD/EOP@EOP, Erika A. Batcheller/WHO/EOP@EOP, Eric J. Morse/OPD/EOP@EOP
Subject: Sunday Briefing

Here is some material you may want to include in Sunday's briefing for HRC's interview, rally and march:

- Paper from POTUS announcement today
- POTUS GMA interview from today
- STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT ON THE MILLION MOM MARCH from today
- Radio Address Text and Paper [embargoed for tomorrow]
- Erika will probably send guidance later too.

Heather, Erika, and Eric: Is there anything missing? Is this excessive??

**President Clinton Promotes Smart Gun Technology
to Protect Children from Gun Violence
*May 12, 2000***

Today, President Clinton will announce that the Justice Department is awarding grants to two gun manufacturers for the research and development of "smart gun" technologies. The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) will provide Smith & Wesson and FN Manufacturing, Inc. a total of \$600,000 to expand their research efforts into smart guns. Smart gun technologies, have the potential to limit a gun's use to its proper adult owner - and could prevent accidental shooting deaths of children, deter gun theft, and stop criminals from seizing and using the guns of police officers against them.

LEADING AN EFFORT TO DEVELOP SMART GUN TECHNOLOGY. NIJ, the Justice Department's research and evaluation arm, will award two grants of \$300,000 each to Smith & Wesson and FN Manufacturing, Inc. to fund additional smart gun research and development. Smart gun technologies show tremendous promise in reducing gun violence that results when firearms are taken intentionally or accidentally from their proper owner. Such guns will have the ability to distinguish an authorized user from someone who is not otherwise permitted to fire the weapon. Today's grants will support the design and testing of smart gun prototypes as well as additional research into specific technologies, including fingerprint identification and embedded microelectronics, to prevent firing by unauthorized users.

PROVIDING FOR THE FUTURE EXPANSION OF SMART GUN TECHNOLOGY. In this year's budget, the President has proposed a \$10 million initiative to greatly expand the research, development and replication of smart gun technologies. Under the plan, NIJ would use the funding increase for additional smart gun research and development, to develop standards for smart gun technology use, and to provide continued funding for ongoing research grants. NIJ has worked with the Sandia National Laboratories to study which existing technologies, such as radio frequency, voice recognition, biometrics, and touch memory technology, could be adaptable to a smart gun. NIJ has supported smart gun research over the past few years in response to FBI data showing that over the past decade, 113 weapons were stolen from police officers, and 57 officers were killed with their own guns.

PUSHING FOR COMMON SENSE GUN SAFETY MEASURES. The President today will once again stress the importance of common sense gun measures that can reduce gun violence by keeping guns out of the wrong hands. First, he will continue to urge Congress to complete its work on juvenile crime legislation and pass a final bill that includes the Senate-passed provisions to close the gun show loophole, require child safety locks for handguns, bar the importation of large capacity ammunition clips, and ban violent juveniles from owning guns for life. Nearly a year has lapsed since these lifesaving measures passed in the Senate last May. The President will also renew his call on Congress to create a state-based licensing system that would apply to all new handgun purchases. Under the President's licensing plan, states would issue a license only to applicants who have passed a Brady background check and completed a certified safety course or exam.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 12, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLIE GIBSON AND DIANE SAWYER
OF GOOD MORNING AMERICA
LIVE AT THE WHITE HOUSE: MOMS AND GUNS

The Oval Office

7:00 A.M. EDT

MR. GIBSON: This morning we are live from the White House, where we will bring together the President and some representatives of the army of moms who will converge on Washington this weekend to flex their muscles and join the Million Mom March against gun violence.

Good morning, America. We begin our broadcast this morning in the Oval Office of the White House.

MS. SAWYER: And it is Friday, May 12, 2000. Welcome to all of you. We're grateful to the President for the loan of the office this morning.

And as you've been saying, Charlie, the rumbling sound being heard out there, according to a lot of women is the sound of moms packing bags, boarding buses by the tens of thousands to come to Washington, they say not for symbolism, but for action. And specifically what these women want -- I'll run through the list of four main things -- they think that people who own guns should be licensed, just like car owners are. They want the guns registered. They also want trigger locks, safety locks on all guns. They say there should be background checks, even at gun shows, and they want longer waiting periods before the purchases of guns.

So, this morning, our questions are, are these the right things, and will they work?

MR. GIBSON: If you're a student of this broadcast, you know about a year ago we were here and we brought a number of students in to talk about gun violence, with the President and Mrs. Clinton. We have come back with some of the moms who will march on Sunday, and we've also brought in some mothers who feel

those who will march on Sunday are simply wrong. And they're actually going to have a counter-march, and some of them are here as well.

MS. SAWYER: And so we also want to explore, are there consensus issues, things we can all agree can and should be done. Everyone certainly agrees there's a problem. Just yesterday we heard about Prairie Grove, Arkansas, where a 7th grader was believed to be on his way to school with a 12-gauge shotgun, got in a shootout with the police.

MR. GIBSON: We are here in the Oval Office with the President, who is joining us this morning. It's nice to have -- nice to be here. I shouldn't say nice to have you with us, since it's your office. Mr. President, good to see you again.

THE PRESIDENT: Good to see you.

MR. GIBSON: Diane is going to go over with the mothers and we understand you will join us in there in a few moments. But we'd like to talk a little bit first.

It as a year ago, Mr. President, that we were here with you with the students talking about gun violence. And you talked to me then about the hopes that you had for new gun control legislation. It hasn't happened. What went wrong?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, nothing went wrong. We passed legislation in the Senate -- Vice President Gore cast the tie-breaking vote to require child safety locks, to ban the importation of large capacity ammunition clips, which would make our assault weapons ban much more effective, and to require background checks when handguns are bought at gun shows and urban flea markets, just as they are now at gun stores.

It passed in the Senate; it didn't pass in the House. And, frankly, I think it was because of the intense lobbying effort against it and the longstanding ability of the NRA to influence congressman. I think that that was a big part of it.

I think, also, the label "gun control" is not nearly as effective as the specific safety measures. I mean, if I said to you, let's take these seatbelts out of cars and repeal the speed limits and repeal the requirement that drivers get licenses because it's "car control," you might be against it, too. When you talk about the specifics, do they make sense or not, do they work or not, the answer is, yes.

Frankly, I still don't understand why anybody would be against these things. And the evidence is clear that it works.

MR. GIBSON: But the Congress is jammed up. I've got here a pile of all the gun legislation that's been proposed in the past year, since we were here before, and none of it has

passed. By my count, we have more states rejecting new gun control legislation than have passed it. We have 15 states that have passed prohibitions on cities suing gun manufacturers. That hardly seems like progress.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, I think you have to look at the fact that the states, which our founding fathers thought would be the laboratories of democracy, have seen some progress. If you look at what Maryland and California and Massachusetts have done -- Maryland particularly is interesting because it is not what you would think of a socially or culturally liberal state, and people from very difficult districts passed some very tough child safety legislation.

I think that there has been some movement at the state level. In Colorado, a conservative Republican governor proposed closing the gun show loophole, couldn't pass it through the legislature, and they're going to put it on the ballot. It will be interesting to see what the people of Colorado do.

I think that as a practical matter, until the public demonstrates its will on this, there may not be more substantive progress. The people are going to have to decide what they believe the right approach is.

MR. GIBSON: When we were here a year ago, you gave me a rather stern talking-to about the political realities on the issue of gun control. Isn't it fair to say that the political realities right now are that nothing is going to happen for this year, while people wait to see the results of the November election?

THE PRESIDENT: I'm not sure. That is one possible outcome. It may be the more likely outcome. But keep in mind, you've still got bills that have passed the House and the Senate. Essentially what's happened is, though, that this is the part about Washington that drives people crazy -- we've got a version of this bill that passed the House, a version of this bill that the Senate, and the conferees are supposed to get together, both parties, both Houses, come up with a bill and send it to me; I sign it or veto it, and then they override the veto or they don't if I veto it. That's the way the system is supposed to work.

As a practical matter, what happens is they're just not meeting, and because they don't want to report out a bill that, again, they can't label as "gun control," but it will have specifics, and people either like it or not, and it will either pass or not. That's what's frustrating. It's just been stalled. And I think the fact that what's really important about it is closing a loophole in a background check law that has plainly worked to save lives in America, closing a loophole in an assault weapons ban that the American people overwhelmingly support, and putting in child trigger locks -- those are the three main elements -- it's unconscionable that it hasn't been voted out.

MR. GIBSON: As a practical matter, doesn't this administration have something of a stake in Sunday's march, hoping that some mothers can do politically what Columbine, what a pre-school shooting out in California, what a six-year-old shooting another six-year-old didn't do, which is to create a gun control lobby as strong as the pro-gun lobby?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think, as a practical matter, what we really have is hoping that these mothers will create a sense of awareness in America that this is not a debate framed the way the NRA has debated, gun control or not, implying that this is the beginning of a slippery slope to take people's guns away, no matter how law-abiding they are, and that it's about very specific, very concrete measures of prevention -- to reduce the likelihood of guns falling into the hands of children and criminals. That's what this is about.

MR. GIBSON: You have made this very much a priority in this administration. Does it surprise you when you see the latest polls, Gallup Poll just out recently, indicating that a plurality of this country actually thinks that Governor Bush would be stronger on gun control and better equipped to handle the issue than the Vice President?

THE PRESIDENT: No, because I think the public doesn't have the information. I don't think there's any -- I think if you gave -- did the Gallup Poll give the public a test about whether -- which candidate was for the following specific measures? I think people form general impressions, and the Republicans, keep in mind, until our administration came in, because of their tough rhetoric and their theory that the answer to every crime was just to put more people in jail and keep them there longer, and they talked about it like that -- they had the overwhelming advantage on all crime-related issues.

But it's not like there's no evidence here. I mean, crime has come down seven years in a row -- eight years in a row, now. This is the eighth year that crime is coming down. Partly it's due to the improved economy, but partly it's due to the fact that we put 100,000 police on the street, that we passed the Brady Bill, that we passed the assault weapons, that we increased enforcement as well.

No one can dispute the evidence. And so what I think there is, when the campaign really starts in earnest, we need to make sure that voters have all the evidence, and then we'll see what they say.

MR. GIBSON: Don't you to some extent make the NRA's case when you say that, though? They say, enforce existing laws. You're not doing enough of enforcing existing laws. And yet you've got murder down 25 percent since '93; gun crime down 35 percent since '92; violent crime overall down 27 percent. That's

done with a good economy, better policing, and not necessarily such stronger gun control laws.

THE PRESIDENT: That includes the Brady Bill, the assault weapons ban, a ban on cop-killer bullets. They were against all those things. When we passed the Brady Bill -- keep in mind, the Brady law, which requires the background checks, was vetoed in the previous administration of President Bush. We passed it again and I signed it. And what did they say? The same crowd here who is against closing the gun show loophole, what did they say then? Then they said, because they were making a different argument, because they're against all prevention measures, they said then, oh, this Brady law won't make any difference because criminals do not buy guns at gun stores, they buy guns at these gun shows or flea markets, or out of the back of pickup trucks on streets. It won't make any difference.

Okay, now, it's 2000, and since we passed the Brady Bill, over 500,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers have been unable to get handguns. There is no question that they used gun stores and no question that the Brady Bill made a difference, and no question it would be even better if all handgun sales were subject to background checks, including the ones at gun shows.

Now, so we're not arguing about that. If it's a prevention measure designed to keep more guns out of the hands of criminals, they're against it. If it's punishment for any kind of gun violation, they're for it. They say that this is the one area of American life where there must be no prevention, and where people who own guns must be subject to no reasonable efforts to construct a system of prevention.

This is not gun control in the sense that we're taking people's guns away from them, or making the decision that they'd be safer or better off to have guns, or that they want to engage in a wide range of lawful activities. And that's really -- they've been working this for a long time and they're good at it. They just say the same things over and over again.

But why were they against this banning cop-killer bullets? Why were they against the Brady Bill in the first place? Why were they against the assault weapons ban? What's wrong with banning the importation of large-capacity ammunition clips? Let's get out of the name-calling and labeling and get right down to specifics -- is this going to reduce crime, or not, in America? Is it going to make Americans safer? I think it is.

MR. GIBSON: Let's get to the specifics of why the mothers are here to march. If you'd join us across the hall, we've got a number of mothers there anxious to talk to you.

Diane, let me go to you over in the Roosevelt Room.

MS. SAWYER: That's right, Charlie. Sitting in this

room, I've noticed a lot of women nodding heads and shaking heads and bursting to ask questions. I'll give you a preview -- just one question, what's it going to be?

MS. HALPIN: I'd like to know why it's been held up in Congress as long as it has been held up in Congress.

MS. SAWYER: All right. We're going to come back after we take a break for your news and headlines and local weather just ahead, and hear what all of these women, with their hearts filled -- and believe me, some of them have stories that will stop your heart, as well -- have to say to the President, just ahead.

* * *

MS. SAWYER: Mr. President, as you know, the women in this room represent many sides of the issue. Some of them are here from the Second Amendment Sisters, the counter-demonstration to the Million Mom March. Also in this room we have many stories of personal terror, some of heartbreak, and a lot of moms who say they want to try to turn heartbreak into purpose, tears into something that matters.

So I'm going to start again if I could, sir, with Linda Halpin, who had that first question and wants to tell you about her son and why her question matters so much to her.

MS. HALPIN: Good morning, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning.

MS. HALPIN: My son was killed last Mother's Day. He was shot in the head, and of course, was pronounced brain-dead. When he lie in the hospital room I promised I would do something about it. So I'll speak on behalf of my son, Louis.

Mr. President, it's been so long that so many of these laws are being held up, and I understand that they're being held up in Congress. I understand that they've been sitting there. And in my heart I feel that if something had been done maybe a year ago, my son may have been alive. I need to know from you, Mr. President, I need to know and I need an answer today, what are you going to do about this in your remaining days in office? I don't want to know what has been done or what could be done, I want to know what you're going to do for my son, Louis.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, the short answer is I'm going to do everything I can. In our country's history, as far as I know, no administration before ours has taken any kind of systematic, aggressive approach to this, except after Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were killed in 1968, President Johnson tried to do something. He tried to pass -- he did pass a very weak background check law, not as strong as he wanted, and

he tried to pass licensing. And since then, until we came in and began with the Brady Bill and the assault weapons ban, no one had done anything.

I have done as many townhall meetings as I could; I have lobbied the Congress as hard as I could; I've also taken a lot of executive action to strengthen the enforcement of the laws and to give us some options we didn't have before. But the truth is, in the United States, we have, by far, the highest gun death rate of any advanced country in the world, and by far, the highest accidental gun rate in the world, because we have taken the position that any sort of sensible prevention measures here should not be passed -- I say, we, as a people. And I think that's the wrong position.

So I've tried to change what would happen. I thought surely after Columbine, we would get some action. The Senate passed, 51-50, the Vice President passed the tie-breaking vote, I think a good bill that would aggressively move us forward. But there are things we can do at the executive level, without congressional action, to continue to increase the effectiveness of the enforcement of the laws we have. And we're doing that.

But we don't have authority to apply, for example, background checks on people that buy guns at gun shows or at flea markets. We have an assault weapons ban, but people can import large-capacity ammunition clips and then adjust guns here and turn them into assault weapons. We have a few states that require safety locks on guns for kids -- that's one thing that not many people talk about, but let me just say, the accidental rate of death from guns of children under 15 in the United States is nine times higher than the accidental rate in the other countries combined.

So I am doing everything I can do. I am not a dictator. The Congress believes -- I'll just tell you the truth -- the Congress believes -- as Congresswoman McCarthy, she's paid a pretty high price for this -- they believe that if they vote with the NRA they will not be defeated. They believe if they vote with you they may be defeated.

This is not complicated. You have to understand, they believe that as long -- you know when Charlie Rose asked me about the poll -- I mean Charlie Gibson asked me about the poll -- Charlie Rose normally asks me about other things -- asked me about the poll in there. You have to understand what they believe. They believe that as long as they can turn it into a gun control, gun control, gun control debate, and stay away from the specifics, they can scare a bunch of guys into thinking that they're going to lose their guns, and that more people will vote against them for voting for gun control measures if it's called that instead of the specifics than vote for it.

Now, look, I know you're heartbroken. I'm doing

everything I can. But let me remind you that Mr. LaPierre, the representative of the NRA, said that I wanted people to die so I could make an issue out of this. That's what he said. Now, I can only tell you that I wake up every day thinking about this. I am heartbroken about this. And I am frustrated. Because they do well if they can turn this into a gun control battle. We do well when we turn this into a specific battle.

The thing that the mothers coming here will do, I hope, is to make this a voting issue. But if it's not, they're going to keep winning. And you just have to realize that.

MR. GIBSON: Mr. President, I want to interrupt you for just a second. We're supposed to take a commercial break here at this point, but we're going to keep going. And we just want to tell our local stations we want to keep going -- because you want to follow up, I know.

MS. HALPIN: Mr. President, I understand you are frustrated and that you're doing the best that you can, but I want to know what are you going to do in your remaining days of office. I do not want another mother to see -- to look at what I'm looking at -- a death certificate for a boy at the age of 22 years old, gunshot perforating the brain, as my son was killed. I don't want to see these -- I don't want to see this anymore. I'm so fed up with what has been going on, with the school shootings -- Columbine, yes, I understand what happened there. My son sat with me and cried with me for the families. Little did he know he'd be dead 10 days later with the same affliction.

Mr. President, again I'm going to repeat it. I need to know, what are you going to do in your remaining days of office. I need accountability for my son's death. I need to -- not to blame it on someone, but someone, somebody has to be held accountable.

THE PRESIDENT: Where are you from?

MS. HALPIN: I'm from New York, sir. Howard Beach.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'm going to do my best to pass this legislation, and I'm going to do my best to make sure that we're enforcing the existing laws, and I'm going to do my best to find more people like you to tell your stories in the hope that more people in the Congress will be emboldened to do what I believe a majority of them think is the right thing to do.

This has been a big issue with me, and I have been very frustrated in my inability to get more done. We did -- we got the Brady Bill and the assault weapons ban through. I just want to tell you this. This is a very -- you just need to know this. We have some people on the other side of this issue today, so I want to compliment them.

I got the first Congress I had to pass the Brady Bill and the assault weapons ban, and at least a dozen of them, maybe as many as 20 of them in the House lost their seats because they did that, trying to help people like you. Because the NRA beat their brains out, because they went home to their districts and told people they were going to take their guns away.

Now, seven years later, none of them have lost their guns and we've got a safer America. And so now they're fighting the new list of prevention measures. But you need to know what happened.

I know this hurts you. And I'm telling you, we're -- ask Congresswoman McCarthy -- we've been up here fighting this for all these years, and it is very, very frustrating.

MS. HALPIN: It won't bring our children back.

THE PRESIDENT: It won't bring your children back. But I'll tell you what will save more children, is if they believe people like you will mobilize other people to change the voting behavior of the American public. That is what will bring -- applause.) That's the truth.

I know this sounds so cruel in the face of your human loss. You have to understand how things work here. Look, I'm not running for anything. I'm doing what I think is right. I have taken on these facts; I have done everything I know to do. And you heard what Charlie said -- gun violence is down 30 percent -- gun crime -- since I took office, 35 percent. The crime rate is down, actually now, to about a 27-year low. The murder rate is down to a 30-year low.

We are making it better. But this is still way too dangerous a country because we take the position that when it comes to these issues, this is the only area of our national life where we will not have prevention. Now, that's really what -- that is the truth. And it breaks my heart, too.

MS. SAWYER: I want to ask you about something in the paper this morning -- I'll get it -- in the paper this morning, George W. Bush has announced that he's going to distribute free trigger locks for guns around the country, and that he pledges to create a national program to do this if he's elected President. Now, that's something, presumably, that could happen immediately, right away. Is it a good idea, and would you support it and do it, too?

THE PRESIDENT: It's a good idea, but why is he doing that?

MS. HALPIN: And why now?

THE PRESIDENT: No, no, wait -- yes, that's good --

that's also good. Why now? Because he's running for President. That's okay, that's what elections are for. People get better ideas all the time. We can't hold people -- anybody who wants to join and start doing things should be complimented. So that's fine.

But I think you have to understand what's going on here. There was a report in the newspaper last week that a lobbyist for the NRA said they would have an office in the White House if Governor Bush is elected. And they were I think the first or second biggest contributor to the annual Republican Party Gala last week. So he wants to move away from that image, he wants people not to think that he won't do anything -- that basically the NRA will control policy on this -- which they will if he wins.

And if he comes out and gives away gun trigger locks, then he doesn't have to explain why we're still importing large-capacity ammunition clips and why he doesn't want to close the gun show loophole.

I know you have people here from Texas who believe that their concealed weapons law is very effective. I know that -- and we could talk about that if you like. But the truth is that everybody is going to want to look like they're doing something, but the most effective measures are opposed by most of the people in the Republican Party. I wish that weren't true. We do have some support from them, and I thank those who are supporting us.

MS. SAWYER: You've talked about the NRA, and as we've said, we have some -- some of the women here this morning, we want to make sure we hear their views, too, who are from the Second Amendment Sisters counter-march. Specifically on this question of a concealed weapon, I want to ask Suzanna Hupp to stand by here. And we're going to see a little taped piece, because she is really of the view that the fact that she couldn't have a concealed weapon may have cost the lives of some people she loves. And let's take a look at a tape.

(Technical difficulties.) We may have had the wrong tape coming up here.

MR. GIBSON: Well, Suzanna, where are you? Why don't you give me a basic -- of what happened in that restaurant.

MS. HUPP: Well, to put it in a nutshell, back in '91, at that point in time in Texas we were not allowed to carry concealed. I carried concealed illegally for many years, at the advice of an assistant DA friend of mine -- of an very urban area. Shortly before that, I quit carrying concealed because I was worried about losing my license to practice chiropractic.

That particular day a guy drove his truck through the window of a restaurant. To make a long story short, 23 people

were killed. It was a very methodical killing, very execution-style killing --

THE PRESIDENT: I remember that.

MS. HUPP: My parents were two of those people. I will tell you that the only thing, the only thing, that the gun laws did was to prevent me from being able to protect myself and my family. That's it, that's the only thing they did.

MR. GIBSON: And you are now in the statehouse of Texas?

MS. HUPP: Yes, sir, I am.

MR. GIBSON: And there is now a concealed weapons law in the state of Texas.

MS. HUPP: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Okay. First of all, let's concede something. She might be right about this. That is, on this particular incidence, if there had been someone in that restaurant who knew how to use a gun and was lawfully carrying it -- for example, an off-duty police officer or somebody -- or in a state with a concealed weapon law, someone who was properly trained and had it, maybe they could have stopped this horrible incident.

There is no law that covers every set of facts. However, what the truth is in most instances is, is that a lot of people have guns who don't know how to use them, and the accidental death rate in America is -- again I will say this -- nine times higher than that in the next 25 biggest countries combined. So it's a question of what makes you safest overall.

But my view of the concealed weapons law is, if a state wants to have one, what do people have to prove to carry a concealed weapon; how well have they been trained; how likely are they to avoid doing something crazy, so that they're only used in cases like this.

But the second thing is, whether you've got a concealed weapons law or not should have nothing to do with whether you close the loophole in the background check, whether you ban the large-capacity ammunition clips, and whether you require child trigger locks, including those that are built into the guns, assuming they're feasible.

She may be right about this, about this example. But I don't think that example is an argument against our legislation.

MS. SAWYER: Mr. President, you talk about the rate of violence in this country, but the Second Amendment Sisters here

have said that there is no evidence that there is a correlation between increased gun control laws, which tend to affect the law-abiding population, and a decrease in violence -- specifically, in England, where you have highly restrictive gun control laws, there's an increase of violence right now. What correlation is there --

THE PRESIDENT: Wait, wait a minute -- an increase of violence from a very low base.

MS. SAWYER: From a low base.

THE PRESIDENT: From a low base. In America, I will say again -- forget about the crimes, just look at the accidental gun rate -- in America, the death rate of children under 15 from accidental gun violence is -- I will say again -- 9 times higher than that in the next 24 biggest industrial countries put together.

So we say, in order to avoid inconveniencing people who have firearms or might want to get firearms, we will not have sensible prevention measures, because it scares everybody because we'll call it gun control. Now, that's a decision we've made as a society.

Look, there is no perfect system. The level of violence will depend upon the kind of people you have in your society, the condition of the economy, the way the children are raised, the values of the society, the values of the community, the effectiveness of law enforcement -- there are many factors involved here. And there is no perfect system. But there is no question that if we want to become the safest big country on Earth, without impinging on our freedom, we will have to do more in the area of prevention.

MS. HOWARD: Excuse me, could I ask a question if it's all right?

THE PRESIDENT: Sure.

MS. SAWYER: And we should point out, you are Susan Howard.

MS. HOWARD: Yes, I am. I would like to ask this lady --

MS. SAWYER: Let's tell people, Susan, who you are, those who don't know you. You've seen her in the ads for the NRA --

MS. HOWARD: Yes, for the child safety. Was your son killed accidentally with a gun, or was it a crime?

MS. HALPIN: It was a crime.

MS. HOWARD: Mr. President, I really have to ask you something. You just made the statement that just sent shivers up and down my spine. You said, let's forget the crimes and --

THE PRESIDENT: No --

MS. HOWARD: No, no, no, sir, excuse me --

THE PRESIDENT: This is the way the NRA operates.

MS. HOWARD: No, sir, it's not. No, sir --

THE PRESIDENT: All I did is -- I don't want to forget the crimes --

MS. HOWARD: No, sir, you said, let's forget the crime and talk about the accidents -- because there is nobody that --

THE PRESIDENT: You know that's not what I meant, to forget the crime, Ms. Howard.

MS. HOWARD: But that's what you said, Mr. President. And I guess this is --

THE PRESIDENT: Well, what I -- I was making the prevention --

MS. HOWARD: No, sir, let me finish.

THE PRESIDENT: All right.

MS. HOWARD: Please may I finish, because you have a bully pulpit, and I know every single person here in this room, the majority of them, are really for you and they love you and they trust you and they believe you. But we are right now living in a country, sir, where our children -- it's not how many gun laws you can continue to pass, it's about my grandchildren, it's about their children, it's about your daughter and whether she ever has any children or not.

Bottom line, the issue is about are we ever, ever, ever, ever going to look at the children and say, that's the focus. Because right now what this is all about is the children have been pushed out of the side -- they do not exist right --

MR. GIBSON: Get to the question.

MS. HOWARD: No, what I'm saying is, if we -- you are the education President, am I correct? Are you the education President -- that is what you have built your --

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that's what the teachers said yesterday when they all came here.

MS. HOWARD: I agree, but I think that's what you built your platform on. What is it about educating children and gun safety that you have a problem with?

THE PRESIDENT: Nothing. Now, wait a minute. Charlie, I have to answer this. On many occasions -- not one, many occasions -- I have complimented, as President, in the face of all the criticism I've gotten from the NRA -- on many occasions I have complimented the NRA on the gun safety legislation -- efforts they've made, the gun safety education programs. I have talked about what they did when I was governor. I've also complimented them on some other things they did when I was governor to reduce violence -- but wait a minute, let me finish.

I think the laws should be more vigorously enforced. I have asked for more resources to do that. Gun enforcement is up since I've been President. But I've asked for resources to do more.

Look, here's my argument. Let me just be very careful here. I do not believe that America has done enough on the prevention side. And I do not believe this problem can be addressed solely by stiffer punishment, by education, and in the case of the Texas -- if a state wants to have a concealed weapons law. I believe we must do more to try to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and away from children in the first place. That's all I said. That's my only position. (Applause.)

But I think the NRA, the education programs, the gun safety education programs are good and would do a lot of good.

MR. GIBSON: Susan, let me address this. Marjorie Hardy is here --

MS. SAWYER: Marjorie Hardy -- she is a psychologist --

MR. GIBSON: -- and assistant professor who worked -- Marjorie, if I quote you correctly -- you worked with your children on education over and over again, correct?

MS. HARDY: That's correct --

MR. GIBSON: And you used those children as part of an experiment that we did on 20-20.

MS. SAWYER: -- which we did at 20-20. And we also had the Eddie Eagle education program come in. And we were talking with kids about how -- what you do when you see a gun in the room, specifically. And they all sat there and nodded, yes, they got it, you get an adult, you don't touch it, you don't touch it -- including Marjorie's son, Matthew, who had grown up with nothing but education against guns.

I'm going to roll the clip. And what happened with Marjorie's son was a traditional -- or typical with what happened with the other kids, as well. And we found that the education, by and large, didn't work with this age kid. Here is Marjorie's son, Matthew --

THE PRESIDENT: How old is your son?

MS. SAWYER: He was age 4 at the time.

(Clip is shown.)

MS. SAWYER: And I want to point out, Marjorie, that the kids knew these were not toy guns. You could hear them saying, "this is a real gun" and reacting to the fact that it was a real gun. Anything you want to add?

MS. HARDY: I do. I actually would like to ask the NRA what evidence they have that their Eddie Eagle program is even effective. You have no empirical evidence that it's effective. Anecdotes, testimonials, that's not empirical evidence. A correlational study, that's not empirical evidence. That doesn't show us that your program works.

And I'm not against education, I think it's important. But to get on the grandstand and to say this is the answer, is wrong.

MS. HOWARD: Okay, in our ad, if you have seen it, is what it's all about is we are not saying we are the only one with the answer. What we are saying is education is an imperative; that it is the same thing if you took your child, I don't care how old they are, and you walk them out to a street corner, and you say to that child, look left and right before you cross the street; look at the light, look at the red light.

MS. SAWYER: -- I engage the President on this issue, if I can, this question of parental responsibility and parental role in general. If I can just move to that -- when you talk about everybody being responsible. The question really becomes, are there just too many guns out there for parents to be able to maintain control --

AUDIENCE: Yes.

MS. SAWYER: And what do you do about your neighbors. And I'm going to show you a tape, and then we're going to meet Lori Smith, because this is the story of what happened to her daughter, Shannon. Let's see if we have the tape.

(Technical difficulties.)

MS. SAWYER: I'm going to go to Lori and let you tell us what happened.

MS. SMITH: Well, on June 14th of last year, my daughter was -- my 14-year-old was standing in the backyard, walking around, talking on the phone to one of her friends, and a bullet fell from the sky and hit her in the head and killed her instantly. The bullet came from a mile away, they believe, and we don't know who did it. We know the direction from, from our house. But in Phoenix, Arizona, people -- or in Maricopa County, people shoot guns all the time, every night, up in the air, in celebration or whatever, for whatever reasons. And it doesn't matter where they are -- they're in their backyards, on the canal banks. And these bullets are found everywhere. And, unfortunately, they hit my child and killed her.

MS. SAWYER: And random accidental shootings, as we know, take place by the thousands all the time. Mr. President, what about the guns out there?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, here's a case -- of course, that probably is illegal. And if it isn't, it should be.

MS. SMITH: It was only a misdemeanor two --

THE PRESIDENT: Did they ever find out who did it?

MS. SMITH: No. And we fought the Arizona State Legislature to elevate the penalty to a felony. We had great opposition from the NRA and the gun lobby -- even though they said, we won't oppose it, they attempted to amend it to the point where it was not going to be enforceable. But we were able, on April 3rd, the Governor did sign Shannon's Law into effect and elevated the penalty to a felony. But before that it was just a lowly misdemeanor, and people didn't care -- they would take a \$250 fine if that's what it was.

THE PRESIDENT: There's a case -- let me just say this. First, I'm very sorry about what happened. It's a terrible thing. And I think what you did in the legislature was a good thing. But I think there's a case where people really do need to be sensitized to the fact that bullets that go up will come down. I think there are some of these things where a public campaign to educate people would make a difference. And that's one I think would make a difference.

The larger question for me -- going back to this question of whether there are too many guns in the society -- I think that sometimes there's a lot of loose talk about this. We ought to talk specifically about what we mean. A lot of these -- most of the guns in America are in the hands of hunters and sports people and law enforcement people, are those guns -- most of the guns that are in those people's hands I think are safe and they're going to be properly used. But there's a huge, sort of sea of guns that's out there just kind of flowing around.

And that's one of the reasons I think that all the sales have to be checked, there has to be a background check on all the sales; and one of the reasons I support these gun buy-back programs that a lot of cities are doing. And we're trying to put more money into it now, as well, because -- (technical difficulty) -- are law-abiding citizens, and you've got as many of these loose weapons as you can off the street.

Is your film on now? Are they trying to get it on now?

MS. SAWYER: No, no, I think we've got you in an echo chamber there for a moment.

We're going to take a break, in fact, Mr. President. And when we come back, we can explore more issues of, do we hold the parents accountable? To what extent? In what ways?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I think you should. I think you should. (Applause.)

* * *

MR. GIBSON: Back to the Roosevelt Room of the White House with the President and some of those who will march in the Million Mom March on Sunday and some of those who are opposed to those who will march.

We were talking about parental responsibility, and there is an idea afoot in many states that there should be parental responsibility laws, so-called CAP laws, where parents are held responsible if their children get hold of a gun that they have in this house and commit a crime.

I'm just curious of this group, anybody on either side opposed to parental responsibility bills? No?

Q I have a caveat to it, though.

MR. GIBSON: All right, but basically not opposed. Because I want to get the question to the President. People seem to believe in this bill, and yet it's a law in only 17 states, and in only 3 states is it a felony.

THE PRESIDENT: And we couldn't get it in the legislation here. Representative McCarthy just pointed out that that was the one provision in my bill I couldn't get in either the Senate or the House version. So I think maybe -- this is something that is encouraging to me, because what you saw on that film with those young children -- below a certain age you can't expect an education program to work, you have to keep the guns away from the kids.

I think that's something we could all agree on we could get done here. That's very important. And I think the adults

should be held responsible.

MR. GIBSON: And yet when you proposed it on a national level, neither House or Senate --

THE PRESIDENT: In the Kayla Rollins case, there is no question in my mind that if there had been responsible adults in that home, that child would be alive today.

MS. SAWYER: That is the Michigan case, we should point out, where a six-year-old boy killed a six-year-old classmate.

MR. GIBSON: A question here. Your name?

MS. THOMASES: I'm Donna Thomases. I feel that we all agree here that education is important. Like Ms. Howard said, we teach our children not to cross the street in traffic. But we also expect the drivers of the automobiles to be licensed and respect the laws, and if they run the red light and hit my child and they speed off, I want to know what that license plate is so the police can go after them. And that's all we're asking to march on Washington for, is something -- the simple licensing and registration of handgun owners, so they do have accountability, so that we can trace where these guns come from and how they get into the wrong hands. It's just common sense.

MS. SAWYER: We should point out to our viewers that Donna Thomases is, in fact, the organizer of the Million Mom March. (Applause.) It began in her living room.

MR. GIBSON: Comment on the registration --

THE PRESIDENT: I think -- let me back up and say, we cannot pass in this Congress licensing of handgun owners, which I have proposed. I think when people buy a handgun they ought to pass a Brady background check, have a gun safety education program, and have a photo ID license, just like when you have a car. That's what I believe.

And the registration of guns, the main virtue of that would be that you could trace them when they were used in a crime. If I steal your car, Charlie, and I drive it down to Maryland and rob a bank, and I leave it in a shopping center parking lot, and it's found, because the registration is on the National Crime Information Center computer system you can find out within literally 30 seconds after it's found what happened to your car.

But we can't even pass a bill to close the loophole in the Brady law when we know the Brady law has kept 500,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers from getting handguns in the first place. So we can't pass that now. But should it be done? Well, of course, it should be done.

MR. GIBSON: I apologize. We're going to have to take another commercial break. Such are the imperatives of television. We will come back, and I should say -- because I know a lot of you have things you want to say -- that we're going to go on through out second hour with all of you. So hold on here just a moment and we'll be back.

* * *

MS. SAWYER: I want to ask another question, because we were talking about safety locks again in the break. How many of you here oppose safety locks on guns?

Q Safety locks, or a law that requires safety locks?

MS. SAWYER: Okay. How many of you are for mandatory safety locks? And how many of you are for only voluntary. All right, we almost have a consensus issue there. At least safety locks should be on guns, one way or the other.

MR. GIBSON: You have a comment over here.

MS. JOHNSON: Yes. Good morning, Mr. President, and I want to thank you for inviting us here. I'm also from New York, and my son was killed last year. I have one question. Over 30 cities are suing the gun industry for flooding our cities and towns with guns. Will we continue the right to sue dangerously irresponsible people who are selling the guns to us?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think we should. And we supported the development of that lawsuit. But there is a move on by the gun manufacturers and their allies to try to get state legislatures to prohibit cities from being able to bring such suits, and their theory is -- I'll make their case for them real quick -- they say if a gun is a legal product, it's wrong to be able to sue the person who makes it.

The other side of the argument is there is -- if you look at the way the guns are marketed and sold, a relatively large percentage of guns used in crimes and used illegally are sold by a relatively small number of the gun dealers in America, and there is some evidence that the people who distribute the guns know that and do it anyway. And that's basically the argument behind the lawsuit.

And lawsuits are supposed to find facts, and this is the fact-finding process we're going to find, to see if a change in these policies, again, would make us safer. That's what it's about. Do I think they ought to have the right to bring the suit? I do, and I have supported it, and I've done what I could to protect it.

MS. SAWYER: On that front, Mr. President, I'm going to give the microphone to Lynn Dix, who has a story to tell.

MS. DIX: I have a lawsuit against the gun manufacturer because my son would be here today if there had been a load indicator, if there had been an integral trigger lock -- he would be alive. And to me, the gun manufacturers are really responsible in that, in addition to parents, in that we know it's predictable -- for decades we have known that children have died in accidental shootings. I mean, there's no question. So if you know your product is involved in this, you can do something about it. You can put in integral trigger locks, you can put in load indicators so a child can pick up a gun -- or any gun owner, isn't that the first thing you want to know, whether there is a bullet in the chamber. Anybody would have to know that.

So I cannot understand why anyone would oppose prevention measures. I don't want to sacrifice another child so that somebody can be prosecuted. What's the sense in that?

THE PRESIDENT: I think one of the most troubling things that I've seen in this whole episode is a lot of the people who are opposed to what I want to do say these things should be voluntary, trigger locks should be voluntary -- let me just finish -- because I'm where you are on this -- so Smith & Wesson comes along and they say, okay, we'll put the trigger locks in and we'll stop dealing with bad dealers, and we'll do other things which we think will help. And they didn't lose a lawsuit to do it, they came in on the front end and said they were going to do it.

And there was the awfulest reaction to them. They were treated like they had betrayed the country, like they had committed treason, and gun manufacturers and everybody, they gave them a gut shot -- it was unbelievable what happened, the reaction to them. And this is something where a free corporation decided they would change their policy in ways that plainly would make America a safer place. And the reward they got was having the other gun manufacturers and some of their allies just try to literally take their heads off. And I think it was wrong. I think what they did was the right thing.

MR. GIBSON: Mr. President, I have to get you to an 8:15 a.m. helicopter. I will do that. I just want to give you a moment to sum up here. And I want to go back to something you said a few moments ago, which was that you wake up every morning thinking more about this issue than any other.

THE PRESIDENT: Domestic -- yes, because it's the one we have made the least -- we have both made the most progress on, but we've got a long way to go. And I think about it also because I grew up in a culture where more people thought like the minority here in this room who are in dissent.

Last weekend I was up in the Ozark Mountains, and I stopped at this little country store in the middle of the Ozarks.

The last time I was there, 10 years ago, it was because I was out on a turkey hunt. Most of the people I spent time with were either, if they weren't members of the NRA -- when I was hunting, you know, duck hunting, or whatever -- they had favorable opinions. As I said, when I was governor, I had both good and one horrible experience with the NRA.

But my view of this is I think we all have to realize we don't -- none of us claim that any of our positions are absolute and that we can make a perfect world, and nobody will ever get hurt, no bad person will ever get ahold of a gun, nothing wrong will ever happen. The people who are coming here to Washington, including many people in this room who have lost members of their families, understand that not every law they're advocating might have saved the particular life of the particular loved one they lost. Their loss got them interested in this, and they began to ask themselves: How can we make a safer country? How can we save more children like my children? How can we save more loved ones like my loved one?

I think, in fairness, the people who oppose them are good people; they really believe I think -- I don't know if they'll say it, but maybe after I'm gone they will -- I think they think we have some -- we either are weak on enforcement or we have some dark hidden agenda to take guns away from everybody, including lawful gun owners. And they think that would change America forever for the worse.

I don't have that agenda. I have never proposed any such rule. What I've tried to do, I'll say again, is I think that this area of our national life is an area where -- to go back to the very first question I was asked -- where I think we should not rest until we think we have done everything we can to prevent bad things from happening in the first place.

Every other area of our national life we first choose prevention. Then if things go haywire, we punish. This should not be the area where we say, because we're worried about people doing something someday that's bad, we're not going to have prevention, we'll just start with punishment. But we'll be for education, but we'll start with punishment. That's my whole take on this.

I think we could do a lot more on prevention, make it a lot safer country, and achieve the objectives of the Million Mom March, which is that all these women that are here, they want fewer stories like theirs. That's my own take on this.

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MORE
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So I just wanted to put this into context. I want you all to talk to each other when I leave. I've talked too much here. I learn more when I listen. Thank you very much.

MR. GIBSON: Mr. President, thank you very much.
(Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all very much.

MS. SAWYER: Thanks for letting us stay in the house while you're away. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: It's your house, not mine. I'm just passing through. (Applause.)

END

8:10 A.M. EDT

(Inaudible segment.) But that does not mean that we are hopeless or helpless in the face of these tragedies. If we can set aside the impulse to fight over who's (inaudible), we can then all work together to take responsibility—in our homes, in our streets and neighborhoods, in our schools, in our communities and our countries. That is why we are here today. Because we want to issue a call to responsibility. We want to give people something very specific to do for anyone, (inaudible statement) really make a difference.

We have some suggestions. The first is to feel that responsibility. As we know, there are steps every one of us can take. Very few (inaudible) to avoid these tragedies occurring again. Each of us, in our own lives and in the lives of those we touch, can be proud parents. None of us should feel responsible for, but should act responsibly in their children's lives. (Inaudible.)

We also have to encourage parents to work together. I can just feel that if you walk up the (inaudible), which is the (inaudible) of gun violence in the first place, in the home, which is a first step...(inaudible) there's been nothing further that you could do. (inaudible).

Parents and citizens, banding together, will make a difference. (Inaudible) time and time again to represent (inaudible segment)...

So today, we are once more reaching out and speaking out to enlist the power of parents and citizens, for what 35 years, households across America have done. And in over a third of those homes, the guns are stored low and unlocked. We must remind parents that that is a job for all of us to do. That this package is dangerous and all too often, deadly. That is what the smallest thing life is all about. I would like to read the pledge now. We passed out copies so that everyone will have this and I hope that it will be posted in every place you can possibly put it up—workplaces, churches, community centers, civil market bulletin boards—everywhere you can display it. Here's what it says:

I will not give my child unsupervised access to a handgun.

I will not allow my child to play in a home where guns are improperly stored.

If I own guns, I will unload them and lock them up, and store the ammunition separately and securely.

I will urge others, including my community leaders and political leaders, to do everything in their power to protect our children from guns.

When we leave this room today, I hope that we will do (inaudible) getting in and everything in our power, to take this pledge and encourage as many others as you can reach, and distribute it as widely as possible.

And I hope that when we use the word "child," we won't just think of a small child. We think of teenagers. We think of young people who too often in our society give a strange or behavior-related distant sign to family and other responsible adults. I hope we'll also be brave enough to call up that neighbor or that friend whose house of the child they play in and say, "Before I send my child over, I want to know if you have guns in your home? Do you keep them safely?" What may seem like these are small steps, all give the effect, all joined together, will save hundreds and thousands of lives.

Mother's Day Gun Violence Event
Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton

South Lawn
May 8, 1999

Welcome to the White House. For this event, I want to use Mother's Day to help us all focus the nation's attention on the most precious gift that any family can hope for—the safety of our children. I'm delighted to have all of you here. I want to welcome Congressman and Mrs. Lancost from California; and Congressman and Mrs. McGovern and their young son Patrick from Massachusetts; the President of Handgun Control, (inaudible name). And I want to acknowledge also the Bell Campaign. And I'm delighted that Secretary Donna Shalala, who is the active and effective secretary of Health and Human Services, who has labored tirelessly on behalf of improved health and safety for America's children and families, is also with us.

I know that there is in this audience, many, many family members who have brought young people (inaudible) to gun violence. I know that you have been personally touched by these senseless acts of violence, and our prayers are with you. I'm hoping that the pain that you have endured will remind all of us about what we need to do to make sure that other families don't face that same pain. I'm filled admiration for the ways you are turning your grief and loss into public action. I know we also have citizens' advocates and children's advocates and law enforcement officials, parents and parent leaders, who are all concerned about gun violence and that we have to have (inaudible). I'm joined on the stage by people who we'll hear from shortly, who are truly (inaudible segment) survivors in every sense of that word. They've been kind enough and brave enough to come forward today, some for their first time, to share their stories and insights with all of us.

...(inaudible) Kathy Murphy...(many inaudible names).

(Inaudible segment.)

I'm also very honored to introduce our first speaker, Representative Carolyn McCarthy, whose husband was killed and whose son was badly wounded by a gunman on a Long Island railroad. She has earned the title that she is often called, "The Conscience of the Congress on Guns." Not only has she brought (inaudible) to restore the sanity of America's gun laws, she has devoted three-quarters of her campaign to address the causes of gun violence. By expanding educational opportunities, promoting safe and drug-free schools, helping to create more jobs that pay minimum wage, doing whatever she can to help create a climate in our country that will turn people, particularly young people, away from violence. Please join me in welcoming one of the most eloquent and passionate leaders in the United States Congress, Representative Carolyn McCarthy.

(Carolyn McCarthy and others speak.)

The pledge will be available on the White House web site, the Handgun Control web site, and the Lifetime network web site. And anyone will be able to link to it from your own site. If we take this pledge seriously for this Mother's Day, and I intend to carry it around with me and to raise it and talk about it and whatever, saying I find myself and asking people literally to sign it, and to promise themselves and the rest of us that they will follow its requirements. But if all do that, we may not have to come together in a setting like this. Maybe next Mother's Day, we will be able to celebrate a step forward in our continuing effort to bring common sense safety to the use and treatment of attitudes toward guns in our society.

I want to add that I often find myself doing (inaudible) to make very clear that if we could preach to the (inaudible), as my husband likes to say, that we can try to reach people who will contact their members of Congress, and as the President explained in his remarks earlier, about two weeks, or about ten days ago, you can say to people, "This should not be a part of the issue. This should not be a divisive issue. We're asking for responsible adult behavior so that our children can be free and clear."

There are many ways that we can and we must protect our children. And on Monday, my husband and I, along with the Vice President and Mrs. Gore, will be convening a strategy session to seek out the best ideas and lay the groundwork for a national campaign to reduce gun violence. We will be joined by parents and young people, teachers and clergy, gun manufacturers and entertainment industry executives that (inaudible) citizen activists, and together we will talk about how we can shield children from gratuitous violence, how we can help empower and encourage parents to stay involved in their children's lives, to provide more and more timely help to struggling young people, and do more to keep guns and bomb-making material out of the hands of young people.

Also, please, in fear that the Senate will begin debating sensible gun control measures this coming week, senators need to fear all of us and we need all of you to get as many young people as you can, to encourage them to let their voices and views be heard and to give them the encouragement to do what they know is right. And to remind them that there are many, many, many millions of American voters and citizens who will stand behind political leaders who are brave enough to (inaudible), whatever that may take us to vote for the measures that we know will save lives.

No one should ever be called to question that if citizens band together, we cannot make a difference. Just think about the difference that they made in our attitudes and our policies toward drunk driving in just a few short years, when the Mothers Against Drunk Driving began to say, there are many, many depictions in our beliefs and our movies and our television sets that people driving drunk is laughed at, that (inaudible) people getting drunk are getting sober (inaudible)... And think of how far they have come because they are a strong group of people. Many of them, and others, made it their business to change the laws and the cultural attitudes toward drunk driving. You can do the same thing about guns. You can take guns out of the (inaudible) that constitutes our children's daily lives. We can better equip and empower parents to meet their children's needs and we can, we can turn the culture of violence into a culture of caring and support.

Thank for what all of you are doing. Thank you for fighting through your own grief, and your own pain, and your own tears, to be here with us. I want to ask the family members who have come all this way, to just stand. And those of you (inaudible), please stand. And I hope that every one of us (inaudible)...remember your faces and your stories (inaudible) to give our children what they deserve most—a future of hope and a world that is safe.

Happy Mother's Day. Thank you very much.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

April 27, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AND THE FIRST LADY ON GUN CONTROL LEGISLATION

Presidential Hall

1:15 P.M. EDT

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you. Please be seated and good afternoon. It's an honor to join the President in welcoming all of you to the White House this afternoon. We are especially honored to be joined by a very large number of senators and representatives from both parties who are here on the stage for this event.

Also, Secretary Rubin and Attorney General Reno, Secretary Riley, Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder, Under Secretary of the Treasury Jim Johnson. And you will hear in just a few minutes from Senator Feinstein, Senator Chafee, Representative Conyers, Representative McCarthy. Also in the audience is Mayor Paul Helmke from Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Bob Walker, President of Handgun Control, Inc.

We have come together in the wake of a terrible tragedy that has put our entire nation in mourning, and that has reminded all of us once again that everything in life pales in comparison to our ability to keep our children safe and out of harm's way. Today, our thoughts and prayers remain with the families and friends and the citizens of Littleton, as they bid emotional farewells to their beloved children and a dedicated teacher.

Yet, even in the midst of this terrible tragedy, we also see the people of Littleton pulling together to pray and comfort and sustain each other. And many of the rest of us are gathering strength and hope from their example.

There are many people here today, out in the audience and on this stage, who have worked tirelessly to create the safe schools and communities that we all want for our children. I particularly want to thank Attorney General Reno and Secretary of Education Dick Riley and Secretary Bob Rubin, because they have worked together, tirelessly, to try to create better conditions to provide for the safety of our children. I also want to thank all the members of Congress who are here who have proved that ending the violence and limiting access to firearms can be, and should be, a bipartisan goal.

There are many others in this room who are on the frontlines in creating safer communities—religious groups, advocates for gun control, victims groups, child advocates, law enforcement, community and parent organizations—and we thank you all for coming. You represent, literally, thousands, if not millions, of your fellow Americans.

All of us here are searching for answers to what happened in Littleton. I don't know that anyone will ever be able to explain fully the events of a week ago. Nor, I doubt, can we create a perfect set of solutions that, if followed, would have prevented what happened at Columbine High School, or would stop forever acts of violence that occur in our communities around our country. But that does not mean that we are either hopeless or helpless in the face of this tragedy. Instead, we have to work together to come up with the best possible solutions that we can craft, that we believe will make a difference for our children. We come here to say simply that there are some tough things we must be willing to say, and some tough steps we must be willing to take if we are to stop the violence.

Now, I hope that everyone does know that the vast majority of America's schools are safe. But we also know that these schools in our country are not islands cut off from the rest of society. No school security system or metal detector can keep out the culture of violence that dominates the lives of so many of our children.

When our culture romanticizes and glorifies violence on TV, in the movies, on the Internet, in songs, and when there are video games that you win based on how many people you kill, then I think the evidence is absolutely clear—our children become desensitized to violence and lose their empathy for fellow human beings. Studies show what many of us have believed, that such exposure causes more aggression and anti-social behavior.

So, today, we must fully acknowledge, once and for all, that America's culture of violence is having a profound effect on our children, and we must resolve to do what we can to change that culture.

It will take strong leadership. I remember well when the President convened a 1996 White House Conference on Children's Television, where television industry leaders joined him in agreeing to air more educational children shows, and also to work with the administration to establish a rating system to help parents navigate what's appropriate and what's not for their kids. And soon we will have the V-chip available for every home in our country.

But it will take more than strong leadership from the media and entertainment world to stop the culture of violence that surrounds our children. Kids need more caring, responsible adults in their lives. Yet, when single parenthood and two working parents are on the rise, too many of America's children are growing up alone. Parents are the central figures in their children's lives, but parents need help. They need help from the larger community, and that means all of us—teachers, police, counselors, community and religious leaders, elected officials—all of us have to help parents find the help they need. And we have to work together to keep our children and our communities safe.

We also know that we have to do everything possible to ensure that young people do not have easy access to weapons. We now know that includes not only firearms, but bomb-making materiel.

Now, any one of us that hasn't become completely amnesiac about our own growing-up years know that children will have disagreements and arguments; they sometimes will even have fights among themselves. Part of growing up is learning how to control one's impulses, which is often difficult for young people. But there is a very big difference between a schoolyard fight that many of us can remember and what happens today, with the access to the arsenal of guns, rifles and bombs that the two young men in Littleton were able to bring into their school. It is criminal how easy it is for children in America to obtain guns.

Just last year, 6,000 students were expelled for bringing guns to school. And Littleton is the latest tragic example of how the availability of those guns can turn a sense of alienation, of rage, of not belonging, of not fitting in, into a deadly encounter. Every day in America we lose 13 precious children to gun-related violence. Every two days, therefore, we lose the equivalent of a classroom of students.

Guns and children are two words that should never be put together in the same sentence. And this President and this administration have been working hard and successfully to try to keep them apart. I think we all in America should take pride in the passage of the Brady Bill, which has denied handguns to 250,000 felons, fugitives and stalkers. And since the crime bill was enacted, 19 of the deadliest assault weapons are harder to find on our streets. We will never know how many tragedies we've avoided because of these efforts. But we do know how much more remains to be done.

Today, we will hear about further steps that we hope all of us are willing to take to make our schools and communities places in which all citizens can live in safety, free from violence and fear. In a few minutes, the people of Littleton, Denver and, indeed, all of Colorado will be stopping whatever they do for a moment of silence on behalf of those who lost their lives. I think it would be appropriate, here in the White House, that we join them; and that we not only use that moment of silence to remember the victims of this tragedy and the perpetrators, but that we think about all of the other children in America who tell us often that they're scared—they're scared to go outside, they're scared because they know people who bring guns to school, they're scared because of what they see happening around them. Our first obligation is to try to make our children free from that kind of fear.

So if we could just take a moment in solidarity with the people not only in Colorado who have suffered this loss, but people throughout our country, on behalf of our children.

(A moment of silence is observed.)

Thank you.

* * * * *

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Carolyn, John Conyers, Senator Chafee, Senator Feinstein, all the many members of Congress who are here. I thank the Attorney General, the Secretary of the Treasury and Secretary of Education. I'm glad to see our old friend, Mayor Helmke, and Bob Walker, and others here. We have, I think, over 40 members of Congress here and two senators who went back to the floor to fight for this issue to be put on the floor today.

I would like to do two things. First, I want to tell you specifically what we are proposing, and I'll do that. But secondly, I would like to tie what we are proposing to all these culture arguments, and talk about, if you will, at least two cultures that exist in America, and say that I think this, in the end, is going to come down to what our conception of America as a community is and what our responsibilities to one another are.

I want to begin by saying a lot of people have made remarkable contributions I think to this effort to get us to look at the violence of our culture and how it makes the most vulnerable of our children, without regard to their income or their social status, closer to the line of taking violent action, and how it complicates family life for everyone.

I want to thank Hillary for what she's done. I also want to thank Al and Tipper Gore, who have done enormously important work on this for years, to try to help us deal with the TV issues, the ratings, the V-chips, and now the new efforts we've been making with the Internet community to give parents some more control over that—and the efforts we have to make to train the parents to figure out how to do it, since their kids all know more about it than they do.

But this is very important stuff. In June, Tipper Gore's going to host our White House Conference on Mental Health. And the Attorney General and Hillary and I were just talking about some of the things we can do to help to make sure all of our schools have the adequate mentoring and mediation, and even mental health services our kids need. All this is very important. And we have to deal with that.

But if you believe that we have special cultural challenges, it seems to me that that's an argument—that we ought to bend over backwards to try to remove the opportunities for bad things happening, if we have more kids that are vulnerable to doing those things—not an argument that we ought to say, well, we should walk away from that, and just try to make sure everybody, individually, in the whole country, never does anything wrong.

And what's the real problem here? The problem is, we have another culture in our country, that I think has gotten confused about its objectives. We have a huge hunting and sport shooting culture in America, and unlike many of you, I grew up in it. I was 12 years old the first time I took a .22 and shot it at a can on a fencepost in the country. I know about this.

We always talk about the NRA—the NRA has been powerful not only because they have a lot of money, but because they can influence people who vote. And in that culture, people believe everybody should be personally responsible for their actions; if you just punish people who do wrong more harshly, fewer people will do wrong; and everybody tells me I've got a constitutional right to keep and bear arms, so don't fool with me; and every reasonable restriction is just the camel's nose in the tent, and pretty soon they'll come after my shotgun, and I'll miss the next duck hunting season.

And we smile about that, but there are some people who would be on this platform today who lost their seats in 1994 because they voted for the Brady Bill and they voted for the assault weapons ban, and they did it in areas where people could be frightened. And the voters had not had enough time, which they did have within two more years, to see that nobody was going to take their gun away.

So we have more than one cultural problem here. And I want to make a plea to everybody who is waiting for the next deer season in my home state to think about this in terms of what our reasonable obligations to the larger community of America are.

Do we know for absolutely certain that if we had every reasonable law and the ones I'm going to propose here that none of these school violence things would have happened? No. But we do know one thing for certain; we know there would have been fewer of them, and there would have been fewer kids killed in the last several years in America. We know that for certain. We know that. (Applause.)

Cultures are hard to change. And cultures should never be used to avoid individual responsibility. But we—when we get to where we change, then we wonder—we look back and we say how could we have ever done it otherwise?

Let me ask you something. Next time you get on an airplane, think about how you'd feel if the headline in the morning paper right before you got on the airplane was "Airport Metal Detectors and X-Ray Machines Abolished as Infringement on Americans' Constitutional Right to Travel." Think about it.

That's the headline in the morning paper. And right next to it there is another headline: Terrorist Groups Expanding Operations In The United States. And you read the two headlines, and you're getting on the airplane—exercising your constitutional right to travel, which is now no longer infringed by the fact that you might have to go through the metal detector twice and take out your money clip or take off your heavily metaled belt, and that somebody is X-raying your luggage as it gets on the airplane. It's unthinkable now, isn't it? This will become unthinkable, too, that we should ever reverse these things, if we ever have enough sense to do them. (Applause.)

But we still have a cultural and a political argument that says to defend Americans' rights to reasonable hunting and sport shooting you have to defend the indefensible, as well. This is—it doesn't make any sense at all, unless you're caught up in this sort of web of distorted logic and denial.

But Carolyn McCarthy may have made the most important point here. We're all in here preaching to the saved—you wouldn't be here if you didn't agree. But somebody needs to call these members that grew up where I grew up, that lived in the same culture I did, that belonged to both parties, and say, hey, we've got to make this like airport metal detectors and X-ray

machines. This is about our community. This is about our responsibility to our children. This is about protecting our children and—the vulnerable children themselves—from people who are about to go over the line here. And this is crazy that we're living in a society that takes no reasonable steps to protect the larger community.

So it's not just a culture of violence that has to change, it's the culture of hunting and sport shooting that has to stop financing efforts to frighten their members, who are good, God-fearing, law-abiding, taxpaying citizens out there, into believing that every time we try to save a kid's life, it's a camel's nose in the tent. (Applause.)

I have had to go through those metal detectors as many as three times, back when I had a real life and I was traveling around, because I had all kinds of stuff in there -- (laughter) -- and every time I start to get a little aggravated, I think, boy, I don't want that plane to blow up. (Laughter.) You know, make me go through a dozen times if you want to. And the person behind me.

Now, we've got to think about this in that way. These are the folks we have to reach. When there are no constituents for this movement, the movement will evaporate. When people from rural Pennsylvania and rural West Virginia and rural Colorado and Idaho start calling their congressmen and saying, hey, man, we can live with this, we can live with this, this is no big deal, you know? I mean, we're just out there doing what we do. We'll gladly put up with an extra hassle, a little wait, a little this, a little that, because we want to save several thousand kids a year.

That is my challenge to you. That is what is going on.

(Applause.)

Now, here are the things we want to do. A lot of you won't think they're enough, but you remember the culture. You change the culture, we'll change the laws. You change the message, we'll do it. And none of them have anything to do with anybody's legitimate right to hunt.

First of all, we ought to strengthen the Brady law. It's kept 250,000 felons, fugitives and stalkers -- (applause). The states now have the Insta-Check System, which is good. The mandatory waiting period has expired—that's bad, because we need it in addition to the Insta-Check System to give a cooling-off period to people who are in a fit of rage. It's important.

The law that we would present, the act will also prevent juveniles who commit violent crimes from ever buying a gun. It would apply the Brady law's prohibition to juvenile violence. It would require Brady background checks on anyone who wants to buy explosives. Very important. (Applause.) And it would abolish, at long last, as Senator Feinstein said, a dangerous loophole that was likely exploited in Littleton, which allows people to buy weapons at gun shows without any background checks at all. (Applause.)

Now, you need to go make this case on this gun show deal. I don't know how many of you have ever been to one of these gun shows. I've been to gun shows in rural America. People walk around, and they've got their cars and they've got their trunk open, and people walk in and say, this is nice and that's nice, and this is a 100-year-old rifle, and blah, blah, blah. And then they say, this is just too much hassle, you know. People pay cash, and nobody, you know—so, it's

going to be a hassle for them. It's worth it. It's worth it. We're sorry—it's worth it. (Applause.)

You don't have to pretend it won't be a hassle. Tell them you know it will be a hassle, it's worth it. People's lives are at stake here. What these shows started out doing—which was a good way for people who live in rural areas—it started out primarily in rural areas—who enjoy hunting and interested in different kinds of weapons, to have an interesting experience on a weekend afternoon—has turned out to be a gaping loophole through which criminals and deranged people and other people get guns they could not otherwise get.

And so we have to say—we haven't asked you to abolish your gun shows, but we've asked you to undergo the inconvenience necessary to save more lives. We don't have to be insensitive, we just have to be determined. But I'm telling you, if we don't do something about this gun show loophole, we're going to continue to have serious, serious problems. And it's very important. (Applause.)

The second thing we've got to do is to strengthen the assault weapons ban, to close the loophole that allows dealers to sell older, high-capacity ammunition magazines manufactured abroad. Now, I bet you—when Senator Feinstein was talking about this she thought, now, who in the world could be against this? I actually had a conversation with a member of Congress who said to me—serious, a good person, it was a really good person, when we were doing this back in a '94 a really good person, this person I was talking to—who told me -- (laughter) -- let me tell you, I just want you to understand what the argument was. He said, but you've got to understand, we've got people who use these bigger magazines for certain kinds of sport contests. And I said, well, so what? (Laughter.)

But he said, they'll beat me if I vote for this. I said, they'll beat you if they think all you're doing is making their lives miserable because some Washington bureaucrat asked you to do it. If you can explain to them that it's worth a minor alteration in their sporting habits to save people's lives, they won't beat you.

But my point is, you've got to help these people. You hear this and you think, God, this is a no-brainer. This is a hundred-to-nothing deal. Who in the wide world could ever be—you have to understand, there is another culture out there. And almost everybody in it is God-fearing, law-abiding, taxpaying, and they show up when they're needed, and they don't like this because they don't understand that if they do what you're asking them to do, they can save a lot of lives. And we have got to fix this. This is just pure mathematics, you're going to have fewer people die if you get rid of these magazines. So you need to go out there where the problem is, and debate your fellow citizens, and discuss it with them. It's important.

The third thing the legislation would do is to raise the legal age of handgun possession from 18 to 21 years. (Applause.) It would also strengthen our zero tolerance for guns in schools—which, as one of the previous members said, had led us to 6,000 suspensions or expulsions last year—by requiring schools to report to the police any student who brings a gun to school, and requiring that the student get counseling. That, I think, is very important.

The provision holding adults criminally responsible would only apply, but—this is quite important—but it would apply if they recklessly failed to keep firearms out of the reach of young people. This would mandate a steep increase in penalties for adults who transfer guns

illegally to juveniles. It would require child safety locks to be sold with all new guns. (Applause.)

Finally, it would crack down on illegal gun trafficking, doubling the number of cities now working with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms to trace every gun seized by the police. I know this is very important to Congresswoman McCarthy. (Applause.)

It would require that dealers submit information not only on the guns they sell, but on used guns, which are often very hard for law enforcement agencies to trace. It would significantly increase penalties for gun runners caught trafficking large numbers of firearms. It would establish a national system as soon as it's feasible to limit handgun purchases to one a month, following the lead of Virginia. (Applause.)

You know, I've got to say—this is very interesting. When we were going over the list of things we wanted to propose, some people said, well, that might be a loser because it sounds to people who care about this like that's too many, and what is this. You know, the states that have had big problems in the past, with lots of illegal gun purchases, and guns then being used for illegal purposes -- Virginia did this, and it really helped them. This was a big deal. And I just talked to Senator Robb about this a couple days ago, and he said, you know, all I can tell you is it's working in our state. So I would ask you to seriously consider what this might mean for our efforts to control the law enforcement aspects of this.

So these are the things that I wanted to say. But I hope you'll remember what I said to you about the culture. We do have to keep working on the culture. Hillary's right about it, Al and Tipper Gore are right about it. We've got a lot of responsibilities. We've got to keep working on the services for kids. We've even got to work on helping parents actually communicate with their children.

One senator called me the last before last, and said he'd had a town meeting in his state with children. And he asked how many of the schoolchildren had actually talked to their parents about what happened in Littleton. And only 10 percent of the kids raised their hands. And one child said, I had to go and turn off the television and tell my parents we were going to talk about it. She said, they're just scared. They're scared, they didn't know how to talk about it.

So there are all these cultural issues. And then there's this big cultural issue of the gun and sport hunting culture. And I hope that—a lot of my folks at home might take offense at what I said today, but I'm trying to help explain them to you. And I felt comfortable taking on these issues, and I thought maybe I was in a unique position to take on all these gun issues all these years because of where I grew up and because I understand how people think who don't agree with this.

But I'm telling you, we've got to keep working until

—

people start thinking about this stuff, the same way they think about X-rays and metal detectors at airports. That's the goal. We have to redefine the national community so that we have a shared obligation to save children's lives. And we've got to get out of this crazy denial that this

won't make a difference. It's crazy, it won't make -- just because it won't make all the difference doesn't mean it won't make a difference. It will make a difference. (Applause.)

I implore you to remember what these members have said. I implore you to go out and get people going at the grass roots, as Carolyn McCarthy said. We need help. We can pass all this, if the American people want it bad enough. We can pass it all, if the American people want it badly enough. And we don't need to go through another Littleton for the American people to want it badly enough. You can help make sure that happens.

Thank you. (Applause.)

THE WHITE HOUSE

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ABC GOOD MORNING AMERICA
SPECIAL ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE

The Cabinet Room

7:05 A.M. EDT

Q We are here to talk about a subject which really is on everybody's mind and has been the topic of conversation ever since the Littleton shootings at Columbine High. But I can't ignore the fact, obviously, that there were events yesterday involving perhaps peace in Yugoslavia and Serbia with the Serbs. Does your gut tell you we have peace?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'm encouraged. I think that, first of all, President Ahtisaari of Finland, and Mr. Chernomyrdin did a very good job. They got our positions very close together and then presented it to Mr. Milosevic, and they have accepted it.

But over the last six and a half years I've had a number of agreements with Mr. Milosevic and the only one that has been kept is the Dayton Agreement where we had forces on the ground. So I will feel much better about this when we have evidence that there is a real withdrawal of Serb forces and when we're moving in.

Q But the word is that they've accepted the terms that we sent in, so why keep bombing them in the interim? When a bully cries "uncle," you let him up, let him go home, you don't keep hitting on him.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you have been reporting about the nature of the continuing campaign. I think it's important that we continue the military action against the military targets until we have some evidence that there are more than words here. For six and a half years, we've had various agreements, but until we had the agreement ending the war in Bosnia at Dayton, the others weren't kept. And so I think that—and we've had the same problem in Kosovo. We want to know that the military forces are withdrawing, and we want to have the timetable for our people going in.

Q So what is the evidence that would bring about a pause in the bombing? Is it the beginning of the withdrawal of the troops, once you see x number out?

THE PRESIDENT: We want to see—we want to have a militarily verifiable withdrawal of the troops and an agreement about the introduction of the international force. That should come—or could come quite soon. The paper that Mr. Ahtisaari gave to the Serbs provided for military-to-military contacts; those contacts are to occur very soon, in the next several hours, probably early tomorrow their time. And then we could proceed pretty quickly.

So, believe me, I'm anxious to end the bombing, but I want to know that our objectives have been achieved.

Q A couple of very quick questions. Were war crimes the war crimes against Mr. Milosevic discussed at all in the talks?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe they were.

Q His staying in office, were they discussed—was that discussed?

THE PRESIDENT: That's not part of the terms that NATO set out in the beginning.

Q So that question is simply left—

THE PRESIDENT: That question is left open. Now, he is subject to the jurisdiction of the International War Crimes Tribunal, which means that if he comes within the jurisdiction of any country that is cooperating with the United Nations, they would have an obligation to turn him over. But that was not a part of the terms necessary to secure return of the Kosovars and, therefore, we have to proceed with the conditions we set out—

Q And very quickly, will the troops, the peacekeeping forces, once they go in, be under unified command?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. They have to be. We have to have an organized, unified way of dealing with this, because their lives will be at stake, too.

Q All right. Let me turn to the situation of kids and guns. The House, in the next few weeks, is going to start debating a bill that includes some gun control measures that were passed by the Senate. And political points will be scored by both sides in that debate.

But you and I know, don't we, really, that it's not going to make a damn bit of difference—only on the margins—in the way kids get guns.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, I don't necessarily agree with that. I think the Brady Bill has made a real difference; having the background checks matters. We know that 250,000 people, from the time I signed the Brady Bill in '94 until last year, were unable to get handguns. We know just since the Insta-Check went in last year, another 36,000 people have been denied the right to get handguns. So closing the gun show loophole matters. Doing a background check for some other things I recommended, a background check for explosives as well—very important in the Littleton case—these things will matter.

Now, does more need to be done? I think so. I think that more does need to be done. The Speaker of the House agreed that we ought to make it unlawful for people under 21 to have handguns, and I was encouraged by that. And that's, of course, something I'm supporting.

Q But even with the checks—what you can't get in the front door, so many people go around and get in the back door. Forty percent of the gun sales in this country are unregulated; nobody checks them. There are a group of kids that you're going to meet in the next half-hour who are going to tell you, if I want to get a gun, I can go get one, and nobody's going to know about it, and I'll have it within a week.

THE PRESIDENT: That's true, but the more we move to make such transactions, and possession unlawful. And the more we move against people who perpetrate them, the more success we will have.

You know, it's funny—even the NRA says, well, we ought to prosecute crimes. Well, we ought to make the right things crimes, and we ought to make it unlawful for children to possess these weapons; we ought to make it unlawful for people to sell them to them or to transfer to them; and we ought to close the loopholes in the law. And as we do that, we will make a difference.

Also, keep in mind that the Littleton example is not the only example that we have to be mindful of. There are 13 children a day who are shot in America, who lose their lives, in ones and twos on the streets.

Q There's a Littleton every day.

THE PRESIDENT: So we have to make—anything we can do to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and kids, we ought to do.

Q But when you went to Littleton, a friend of yours who supports you on gun control said to me in the last 48 hours, the President, because, as he said, Littleton has seared the national conscience—the President had a chance to roar on gun control and he meowed—and that was a friend of yours. There are very basic measures that could be taken that people agree on. We register every automobile in America—

THE PRESIDENT: Absolutely.

Q -- we don't register guns. That's a step that would make a difference.

THE PRESIDENT: Look, let's join the real world here. You want to have an honest conversation? Let's have an honest conversation. I am the first President who ever took on the NRA. I got my party in Congress to stand with me on the Brady Bill, which has made a difference, on the assault weapons ban. We are now in the process of closing loopholes in the assault weapons ban.

What happened to them when they did that? In 1994, we lost between 12 and 20 members of the House of Representatives because they were targeted by the NRA for standing up for the lives of our children. Now, wait a minute. You talk about roaring and meowing—then I came forward with this legislation. Did this roar through the Senate? No. We passed a bill causing the gun show loophole by 51-50 because of the Vice President of the United States. Did the House of Representatives make a priority out of what was passed in the Senate and pass it right through? No. They went home before taking action. Why? To give the NRA time to lobby them, to water down what was passed.

Now, I have made it perfectly clear that I want to get what was passed in the Senate, passed in the House. Then we will come back and try to pass some more things, because Littleton did sear the conscience of the nation. The question is not whether we have seared the conscience of the nation; the question is whether, on gun issues, whether the people who now constitute the House and the Senate will pass what is sensible.

And I intend to do that. But for you to say that I shouldn't take what I can get because—and instead I should ask for things that I am absolutely positive will be defeated in the Congress, is quite wrong. And to ignore the fact—and whoever you talked about that you don't want to out here—to ignore the fact that my administration and my party took on this issue when no one else would and paid a huge price for it—and lost control of the House of Representatives in all probability because of it—and to pretend that this is an easy thing now because Littleton happened, is wrong. We are working very hard to pass sensible measures that will make a difference, that will save children's lives.

You say they won't save all lives. You say there are stronger measures that could be taken. You are absolutely right. You have no evidence that they could pass in this Congress.

Now, I will do my best to advocate more, but I am doing it—and I've made it clear. I want to do this in sequence. I want to pass what we've passed in the Senate in the House. Then I want us to come back with a second set of recommendations. I intend to keep working on this. I

think this is going to take years. We have—the Congress is out of touch with the American people.

Q But let me come back to you on that. The polls—

I believe—really, the polls have shown that this country would accept registration of firearms. And yet we don't do that, and we're not fighting about regulation of guns—

THE PRESIDENT: That's because --

Q -- you regulate every other consumer product in America.

THE PRESIDENT: But you want to have a candid conversation. The reason is, this Congress came to power after the 1994 elections because in critical races the people who voted for more modest things, like the Brady Bill—which the polls showed the voters support—got beat. They got beat, Charlie.

Q But hasn't the NRA won the debate at that point?

Once we say—

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q -- it's politically impossible—

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q -- we can't do it—

THE PRESIDENT: I didn't say it was—

Q -- we won't propose it, hasn't the NRA—

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q -- basically framed the debate at that point?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I didn't say it was politically

impossible. You say I should be recommending more; I ask you to look at the vote in the Senate, which historically has been more willing to deal with this than the House, and look at what we passed. We passed closing the gun show loophole—which, I don't care what you say, or my friend says these kids say, is a big deal—we passed it by one vote. One vote.

And you're saying, well, why didn't you recommend something more sweeping? And I told you that I intend to recommend further measures, but I'd like to pass what we have passed to the Senate, because it makes a difference. The things that we passed in the Senate will make a difference.

Should we do more? Should people ought to have to register guns like they register their cars?

Do I think that? Of course, I do. Of course, I do. Now—but I tell you, the American people may have one opinion, but they elected the Congress and the Congress doesn't have that opinion. I'm going to do my best to move the Congress and the people can move them, but we can only—how foolish would it be for me to be debating this issue when these things are before the Congress, they can save children's lives, and I should blow by them because they're not enough? I don't think so.

Q I want to take you to the other room. There are some young kids in there who want to ask you about other things, about the glamorization of violence in the media, those kinds of things—about parental responsibility. We'll get to all of that. Come on in the other room, we'll do that.

THE PRESIDENT: Good.

Q Let's go to Diane in the Roosevelt Room.

* * * * *

Q Good morning, America. I'm Charles Gibson.

Q And I'm Diane Sawyer.

And we continue our special two-hour broadcast on kids and guns from the White House. We have come into the Roosevelt Room, the President has accompanied us and we have been joined by the First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton. And for the next 30 to 35 minutes or so, we're going to broadcast without commercial interruption, talking with a group of high school students that we have gathered from around the country about this subject.

Q And they are experts in some of the themes that we have all been talking about: accessibility of kids to guns, parenting, and whether this is a culture that glamorizes violence and whether that's what we want or not. So Charlie and I are going to take our seats in the Roosevelt Room bleachers here, and I'm going to start with Albert Smith, because I know you wanted to say something or ask something.

I should tell you, Mr. President and Mrs. Clinton, that Albert's sister was wounded in gunfire in Evanston, Illinois. She's all right now, but he has some pretty passionate feelings about all of this.

So, Albert, you begin.

ALBERT: Well, Mr. President, I listened to your interview and I couldn't help—well, I'm encouraged by the fact that you're working hard to pass some gun legislation, but how can I be sure that that legislation will prevent accidents like my sister being shot and various friends of mine? How can I be sure of that? And how spectacular is this legislation and what makes it different?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think, first of all, we can't say that any one law will make a difference. But I think if you look at the school shootings—and I think all of you know this, but we ought to say this to America—this is not just about school shootings, although they're very important, but 13 children are killed every day by guns on the streets, in the neighborhoods and various circumstances.

So I think there are basically three problems. You have more kids that are kind of at risk of violence. You have a culture that desensitizes and glorifies violence, and desensitizes people to it. And it's way too easy to get guns.

And so what I think we have to do is to work on all three things. And we've got to pass as much legislation as we can that makes it—keeps guns out of the wrong hands, and basically makes it harder for kids and harder for criminals to get guns. And this legislation will do that. It will help us close some of the loopholes; it will help us strengthen the background checks. It will also do something that was very important at Littleton and will become increasingly important with the Internet giving so much information to kids—it will put a lot of our background requirements for guns into explosives, too, which I think are very important. After the Littleton thing, I think we can all see that.

But I can't guarantee that. There are over 200 million guns in American society now, in a country of about 260-plus million people. But we can make it a lot harder, and we can dramatically reduce the chances that such things will occur.

Q If I could, Mr. President, I would like to play a short clip here, because I want to ask the students about something, and I'd love to have Mrs. Clinton talk to this as well.

We keep talking about legislation, but what about you in schools? Reading through the notes, I was so surprised how many of you have known that a kid, a friend sometimes, had a gun in school, but you said you weren't sure you'd tell anybody about it.

Let me just show you a young man—he's a freshman, and he travels around the country showing how easy it is to walk into school carrying not gun, but guns. I want to play this clip.

(A video is shown.)

Q Twelve total guns. He does it as a warning to students and to teachers that it can be done without you being able to spot it, which raises this question I want to ask all of you. It's called snitching, as we know, but how do you feel—will you all be willing to take responsibility if you hear someone threatening something, if you see somebody with a gun, telling an adult?

And then, Mrs. Clinton, I'd love to know what you'd like to say to them about that.

Q If you saw a friend with a gun in school, how many of you would tell an authority?

STUDENT: Now I would.

Q Really, truly, truly, truly. Would you have two months ago, three months ago?

STUDENT: Yes.

Q Fewer.

Q Trey faced this, as you'll find out in just a few moments.

Mrs. Clinton?

MRS. CLINTON: I think that's a very important question, because when we talk about dealing with this issue we're really asking everybody to take responsibility. And I know that it's hard. I've been in lots of settings with lots of kids, talking to them. You know, sometimes you don't know whether to take somebody seriously. Somebody says that they're really mad or they're going to kill themselves or kill somebody else—it's sometimes hard to know whether they're just blowing off steam or whether there's something more there. But I think we ought to err on the side of caution.

And I was glad to see all your hands go up and I was glad you were honest enough to say that a couple of months ago that might not have been the way you would have felt. Because we're really going to have to look to young people also, not just adults and not just people in government positions, but everybody to figure out what we're going to do about this and to be more thoughtful and really try to respond.

And, more than that, if somebody is doing this, that person needs some help and needs some intervention or some supervision, or needs somebody to try to give them some guidance that they may not have otherwise.

Q Anybody here disagree and think you shouldn't be doing it? Go ahead.

CHRISSY: My name is Chrissy and I'm from Kennedy High School. I'm a leadership training institute student. I was wondering what actions you think as a student that we can take in our community to help gun control further?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think there are a lot of things that you can do. On Mother's Day we took a pledge that I hope everybody would take, and I hope that a lot of parents listening would take it, too. I think that young people, especially teenagers, not to give any child unsupervised access to a firearm; not to go into homes, or let your younger siblings go into homes where you know guns are and are not safely stored and taken care of.

And I know this sounds like, you know, the nosey mother routine, but I think every parent—and I would suggest older teenagers, like yourselves, you need to find out what's in the homes you're

going to. You guys are going to a party, make sure there are no guns around; make sure that the parents there keep them under lock and key if they have them. If you own a gun or you know people who do, make sure it's locked up and stored without the ammunition. In fact, make it stored where the ammunition is stored separately.

And then I believe that there is a lot of work that young people can do in schools through peer mediation and counseling to try to help solve problems, but I also think your voices need to be heard on this gun legislation debate.

You know, we've made some progress in the last several years with the Brady Bill and some of the bans on assault weapons, but we have a lot of work to do. And there's no reason why a lot of you who are about to be or already are 18 can't make sure your voices are heard on that, too.

THE PRESIDENT: If I could just say one thing, to go back to put the two questions together, there are some schools, some high schools, which have hotlines which young people can call if other students bring guns to school, and they know two things if they call. They know, number one, that the children will not be outed, their identities won't be disclosed if they call, and, number two, that some authority will check on the presence of the gun in the school that day. So I think that's really important. If it's a problem in schools throughout the country, it's a specific thing that some schools have used with great success.

Q Mr. President, if I could ask you, members of gun organizations say that the ability is there to do something about kids -- 6,000 kids in the last two years in schools found to have guns, but, in fact, only 13 were prosecuted for it. Do you think there should be more prosecutions, and do you agree?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. You know, I don't think all those kids, the reason they know that and the only reason they know that is that since I've been President, we instituted a zero tolerance for guns in schools, so the kids were sent home if they had the guns.

Now, it's up to the local prosecutors to decide whether to prosecute them. But you should know that the general argument that prosecutions are down is simply not true. And federal prosecutions are up by 30 percent of serious crimes, and overall gun prosecutions, state and federal, are up. And gun-related crimes are down.

This is a special problem—problems of violence against children by guns is a special problem that, in my view, you can make the prosecution argument. We ought to make it harder to get guns, we ought to deal with the culture and we ought to deal with the schools and the communities and help the parents and the kids do more.

Q I want to call on Leeanne Dews if I can, because you had your hand up. And, first of all, Leeanne, can I just tell the President and Mrs. Clinton that your sister was killed in Pearl, Mississippi.

LEEANNE: Yes. You had said something about zero tolerance in the schools—then why isn't it mandatory for metal detectors and police security at all schools?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think—let me say, generally we have not had a federal law that requires schools to do metal detectors, but what we do is we provide funds every year to help schools buy the security equipment. And I believe—when I saw that young man there take the 12 guns out of his clothing, I thought maybe we should do more in that regard.

A lot of schools are, for obvious reasons, reluctant to have metal detectors. But I think that the schools that have them have not had these instances, basically because you can't get in—at least inside the school.

Q I'm interested to know what percentage of you, since you all live with this problem every day, what percentage of you would be willing to accept metal detectors at your schools. And I'm going to take this a step further in a minute.

There is a county—we've got a little piece and I want you to take a look at it. It's a piece about a county, Bibb County, Georgia. And in Bibb County, it's the largest county in Georgia—it's never had a gun incident in schools. But they have police walking into classrooms. Take a look at this piece of videotape and you tell me what you think of it.

(A video is shown.)

Q Now, they're willing to sacrifice that. There's pictures of police walking and interrupting classes, checking students during class. Are you willing to go that far?

KATHRYN: My name is Kathryn Long, I'm from Kensington, Maryland. I know that at my school, after the Littleton incident, I was very interested in what my principal would do about it, and he was very calm about it. He focused on communication in how he talked to us, and that communication was important. And that made me feel safer.

I know that at my school, we don't have anything close to that much security. They've never had a gun at their school, but neither have we. And I know that at my middle school, there's a lot of security and I felt kind of really trapped in, and that was when I rebelled against it. And I'm not quite sure if making all teenagers feel like villains because there are a couple that brought guns, that that's a quick fix to the solution.

And maybe in the meantime, that would be important. But I don't think that you can lock down with police force. I think this is more of a societal issue. I mean, for years, kids have been teased and for ages kids have gone to school, but it's now in 1999 and the '90s that they're killing each other for it. I know that my parents' generation, to rebel, they made love.

(Laughter.) But we are rebelling by harming other people. I believe the media has a large part in it. And I disagree with things like metal detectors. There are ways to get around it.

Q Let me turn to Sarah McCarthy, who is here from McLean, Virginia. Do you have a comment on that?

SARAH: You, especially, Mrs. Clinton, have always encouraged "It takes a village to raise a child," and that whole idea, and bringing that into the school system and having everybody involved. But especially watching that piece, how do you draw the line between bringing in security, which I think is definitely needed, such as metal detectors, searches, things like that—drawing the lines, and then crossing over a line where students start to feel violated, their personal rights?

And I know there were threats at my school and, you know, there was extra security that day and everybody did pull together, but at the same time, having the policemen walking down the halls, in a way that brought in a fear that wasn't there before. And how do you draw the line between the two, between higher security and being safer and just personal rights?

MRS. CLINTON: I think that's a really important question, Sarah. And I think that we've got to go at this from so many different directions. The metal detector is much less intrusive than having random searches and the like. And I think each community has to do a very careful analysis of what they think is really going on with their kids. In places where metal detectors have been used, I think people feel that after a while it didn't become much of an intrusion—it's like getting on an airplane, we all do it these days.

But that's not the real problem. And so I think we have to both do what we can to protect kids, but we've got to do a better job of—going back to your point about creating a climate in which

kids feel free to seek out help, kids feel that they've got support if they've got problems. Those guns are like a symbol of the problems they're bringing to school. So we need to do more to try to go on many different fronts to deal with this problem.

Q I want to turn to the issue, if I can, of glamorization of violence in the American culture, because I know we have a war going on here about video games and the extent to which they contribute and don't. But before we do, as a footnote, I'd like to ask Trey Carver, sitting next to me, just to tell for all the school officials out there, what happened when he says he went in to say he knew Thomas Solomon in Conyers, Georgia, and he felt there was trouble brewing.

TREY: I went in there at school, and at lunchtime we went outside to go use the pay phone and he took me in a corner and showed me a gun that he had in his book bag.

Q This is how long before the incident?

TRAY: I can't recall.

Q Weeks?

TREY: Yes, it was like a couple of weeks, probably.

And he showed it to me and said he was going to sell it after school. So later on that day, I was thinking—I thought to myself I needed to do the right thing, so I went to the office and said something about it. And then went and looked for him, but he had left school early. And the next day, they searched him, but they didn't find it on him. And a couple weeks later, he ended up shooting six people.

THE PRESIDENT: What do you think they should have done?

TREY: I think they should have done a lot more than they did. I think at least if they didn't, they should have called his parents and maybe had them maybe even look for it. I was going to ask you what more could be done than what's already done about a suspected gun at school.

THE PRESIDENT: These are questions that have also been asked in Colorado because of what was in the website, the kid's website and other places. And I think it's important that people like you, as I said, have a way to make these reports and then you know they're going to be systematically followed up on, either by the school or the law enforcement.

I also think it's important that when a young person like that is obviously in trouble, you not only try to get the gun away, but you try to figure out what the real problem is and what kind of help the kids need. And then it's provided in some sort of systematic way. A lot of these kids, I am convinced, could be turned away from this before it's too late if they could have been identified early enough.

And so I think we need a combination of, you know, go after the source of the—go after the guns and all that, and trying to deal with the kids. And I think—again I would say, I've been amazed in how many of these cases—I don't know what the facts are in Pearl or in Paducah—I do know in Springfield, Oregon, because I went out there to talk to the people there, that there are a lot of people who were really concerned about that young man before this happened. So I think—we're going to have a mental health conference with Mrs. Gore and the Vice President, Hillary and I are, in a few days, and we're going to talk about what more can be done when the kids know that somebody is in trouble, to go really help them before this happens. Just like you knew. There should have been someplace else you could go where you would know not only would they try to get the gun, but there would be somebody all over that kid, in a positive way, trying to figure out what the deal was and how to help him move away from it.

NAOMI: I'm Naomi, from Fairfax, Virginia. And when people were talking about, like the metal detectors, we don't have that in our school. But I think it's just—I think kids are kind of

being—it makes them uncomfortable. But when you think about it, what else are we supposed to do? I mean, it is happening and the Littleton stuff, I mean, so many people were killed. I mean, you'd think that we'd be able to trust kids and that wouldn't be happening in schools where you're supposed to be getting an education, but it is. And I don't think there's anything else we can do. I mean, there is, but I think that's one of the precautions we have to take—is, yeah, we're taking away some people's sense of security, but, I mean, that might also be taken away when somebody gets killed, you know?

Q Can we tackle this issue of video games, "Mortal Kombat," "Doom"—violence in the media? If somebody came to you and said tomorrow, we're just going to stop the violent video games, we're just going to cut them out and not do them in this country, what would you all say?

BRANDI: I agree, because if you look at it, I mean, Andy Griffith, for instance, was on for 30 years, you know, and there was nothing wrong with that, with a cop without a gun. You know, there was no violence. But now you've got the Roadrunner who dies every episode, bounces back 30 times. (Laughter.) And then you've got Mario who jumps off the cliff. Okay, he's dead, then he come back. Our child is violent because of that. And then you've got Barney, you've got Teletubbies, Sesame Street.

Society says, okay, they're homosexual so we can't show that to our young children.

(Laughter.) Like they're going to know. (Laughter.) Come on, people. (Laughter) -- the shows that are teaching children good morals, but then you got shows up there like Mortal Kombat and something that says, if you want to kill your best friend, here's your chance. You know, hello, where's the people who—

Q Do you all think those games desensitize people?

ALBERT: I think they do. I think they definitely do. I mean, when—I have a nephew at home, and my nephew watches cartoons, and now, I look at those cartoons and I'm like, gosh, these are pretty graphic.

Q I'm going to come back at you about that point in a minute. Go ahead.

MISSY: I'm Missy Jenkins from Paducah. And I've noticed like when I watch something like that, something that's like with—you know, it doesn't affect me in any way. But there are some people that are a lot more sensitive. It makes it so much more of a reality to them, that they kind of use that as a way to take care of their problems.

Q Other countries—you know, Japan has maybe more violent video games than we do, more violent videos, and yet, a handful of killings every year by guns. The difference is guns.

THE PRESIDENT: But let's go back to what Missy said. I'm amazed that any of you said you were concerned about the video games, because most of the young people I've talked to, there's a lot of support for tougher gun control and for better security and for more support services, but a lot of young people I've talked to say—they say I'm an old fogey when I talk about the movies and the video games.

But here's the point I want to make. I want to make the point Missy did. Most of the kids are fine and will be fine under any culture. It's true, they show them in Japan and Europe and they don't have the killings. But what do we know about America? We know that in America, number one, we know more and do more of it in the aggregate. The average 18-year-old has seen 40,000 murders, and 200,000 violent instances over the media, number one—more of it. Number two, in our country our folks work harder, they travel more, they spend less time at home—on average, 22 hours a week—than they did 30 years ago. That's two years by the time you turn 18. Number three, it's easier to get guns.

So if you have vulnerable kids, where the line between reality and fantasy blurs, they are more likely to be influenced by this. And that's something I'd ask the rest of you to be sensitive to, because way over 90 percent of the kids are going to be fine, but it doesn't take many to change people's lives forever in a bad way.

Q I'm going to get a response here from Scott, because I happen to know that Scott is a "Doom" website master.

SCOTT: The problem I feel with basing all this on the violent video games and such, on these few incidents that have happened so far, is I know "Doom" alone has had—almost a quarter of the country has played the game, pretty much. And there's—something like three or four of the people involved in shootings so far have been known to play the game, such as Eric Harris from Littleton, which they've been making a big deal out of that, of him having the website based on "Doom" and making his own add-on levels and such.

And it's just hard, I know, for, like, the entire rest of the people that play computer games—because I've spent the entire portion of this week on line talking to everyone else that I know of to get, like, what their reactions are for all this, and basically everyone just feels that because of these few people it's all, like, we've all become bad guys in the entire situation because of us playing the violent video games and things like that.

STUDENT: I don't think you can blame the video games. I think it's the—I mean, when you get exposed to it you become numb to it but, I mean, the people that are doing it are the people at fault. I mean, they might have some psychological problems, but I don't think you can blame other things.

STUDENT: I think it starts with parenting.

Q But the parent is saying, what can we do?

STUDENTS: I have a question, actually for Mrs.

Clinton. Do you feel that it's a lack of moral values and upbringing in our family that children are lashing out and acting this way? Do you hold the parents accountable for the actions that their children have committed in the Littleton incident, the Springfield incident? Or do you hold the children responsible for their own action, because these children were older than 14 years old?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think that's a hard question. I would just answer it like this: I think that our society as a whole has to take a hard look at personal responsibility and I think everyone has to be responsible for his or her own actions, so the individuals who have committed these crimes have to be held responsible. But we have to ask ourselves, what is it that leads a young person to feel so alienated, to feel so much hatred, to have unmet needs—whether they're psychological needs or whatever they might be—that would push them over the brink to do this. So I think we have to hold people responsible. And I think that something that Bill said is really important—it is just a fact that parents are spending less time with kids—now, that's a fact—than they did 20 or 30 years ago.

STUDENT: The cost of living has gone up, you've got to work.

MRS. CLINTON: People are working harder, people are commuting more hours, people are really unable, they believe, to invest the kind of time that I think you need to invest in raising children.

So there's many social issues. And I hope that this national campaign against youth violence that we're trying to get started here out of the White House is going to give people a chance to

be engaged in a real honest conversation about what our priorities are and what we should spend our time doing.

THE PRESIDENT: I'd like to ask a question. How many of you talked to your parents about this within three days of the Littleton shooting? I think that's very important, because one of the things that we don't know—you asked Hillary a hard question about the parents of the children involved—obviously, I don't know them. I've wondered so much. But I think it's important that we understand that a lot of children are strangers in their own homes, and that—including kids that will never commit crimes. And somehow, I think we've really got to do something to rekindle, to give both the kids and the parents the courage to start talking to each other again, because I think it would minimize the chances of those things occurring.

TIFFANY: I have a comment on that. I'm Tiffany from Littleton, Colorado, and I have heard from Robin Anderson that Dylan's parents that day were concerned about him and that they thought something was troubling Dylan, and they said they wanted to talk to him that day after school. They were close with this son; it is not necessarily just his parents. He also did listen to violent music and did play violent video games, but so do many teenage boys. I don't think you can just pinpoint somebody by saying that. And I think that you have to dig deeper somehow and just make affection more apparent in society and have acceptance and just love. And I don't mean to sound like some hippie or something, but really, that's—I think the root of all of this is everybody just feels so negatively and doesn't know where they have an outlet.

THE PRESIDENT: I agree. Can I ask you one question? I'd like to ask all of you a question about this. And again, all I know about this is what people like you have told me. That is, you know, Hillary and I, we watch the television, we talk to the families of the children that were killed, and some of the young people who are still hurt. But I'd like for all of you to help us with this.

All the reports say that one of the things that drove these two young guys over the edge was that they felt that they were totally disrespected in the school; that they felt that there were groups that looked down on them and badmouthed them and tried to humiliate them; and that as a consequence, they not only wanted to get back at the people they thought had dissed them, but they were looking for somebody to look down on. And that's one of the things that made the African American young man a target.

How many of these kids do you think are violent because they think their contemporaries, kids treat them in a contemptible way?

TIFFANY: I don't think that they were treated that badly. I think that's been overexaggerated in a lot of instances. I think that it was more of like an absence of reality in their mind when they did it, because I don't think they were particularly out after anyone—they randomly shot people just from the lunchroom. I mean, they weren't after anybody in specific.

Q Excuse me, Tiffany. I just want to take a break, let all of our stations know, all of you who are just joining us that we are continuing our two hours live at the White House with President Clinton, Mrs. Clinton, 40 students from around the country talking about kids and guns.

Mr. President, if I could, I've heard people say there is some one thing that people in government and people in politics can do. They can say, we will not take contributions, political contributions, from anybody who is head of a company that puts out a violent movie, a movie that has a lot of shootings in it; we will not take contributions from companies that purvey violent video games; we'll just stop tomorrow. Willing to do it?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, would it have an impact? I don't think so, because then that would increase the relative influence of other people's contributions. I don't know. I think—let me just say this: Our administration has taken on not only the gun issue, we have taken on the entertainment issue ever since '93. And I would like to point out something. Your network and others have adopted a TV rating system, supported the V-chip, which is coming in all the new televisions. The Internet people have helped us with screening technologies for parents, with closing loopholes in the rating systems for the games. I mean, I think there has been some progress here.

I think the real problem we've got in the media is that this violence sells and I think that the rating system for the movies and television is a little too porous there. Again, I think it's more the exposure of young people before the lines between fantasy and reality are fully clarified. That's the one thing that I would say to the young man in the back that defended the "Doom" game.

Look, I like to go to action movies. I love movies. But what happens is, if you look at the aggregate amount of violence—and it's not any one movie, it's the aggregate amount that young people see, and in video games, participate in—by the time they're grown, in their younger years, when they're most vulnerable, they are desensitized to the consequences of violence. There are over 300 studies which show this. This is not a matter of debate.

And I think the question is, what can we do to reduce the volume of violence to which our youngest people are exposed? And that's why we're doing what we can do on this, on the entertainment. But I will say this: the entertainment industry, at least in the beginning, has been more responsive to a lot of these things than the gun industry. Now the gun manufacturers are coming along, but I think the entertainment industry is going to have to do a lot more, a lot more.

Q But just a quick question. Sony makes the "Doom" game—I don't mean to pick out that one game—but Sony is a huge contributor to the Democratic Party. So you have access to the president of Sony. If you picked up the phone and were talking to him, what would you say to him?

THE PRESIDENT: I would ask him to change the game. And I think that we need to take steps to make sure that younger people don't get it. I think people get this stuff too young.

What you say, by the way, is right. Again I will say, most of the people that—you can show them things, they can play games or whatever and they're not going to be affected. But what you have to be sensitive to is if you fill a society with this and you have more kids that are more vulnerable anyway, because they have less supervision at home than in other societies and they have easier access to guns, then you have created a combustible mix which will lead you to more instances of young violence. That's the deal.

That's why—that's the argument I make to the entertainment industry all the time, that's why they should do more. And that's why the gun people should do more. And that's why parents and communities should do more. It's why you should do more to try to help identify children like this.

STUDENT: Then why have we added on to the violence by allowing the "s" word and the "a" word and the "b" word added on to now ABC, NBC, Channel 9, 7, 5? how come we added on to that with the violence on television, with "New York Undercover," "NYPD Blue," and now we allow those people to say those—language, not on just movies from Hollywood, but on our

local TV stations now? So we just added on to the problem, so it's just going to keep building and building and building.

And Littleton and Springfield are now—they couldn't take any more and it just crumbled. This is kind of like—people use this as their First Amendment right that we can say this, but we just added on to it.

KATIE: My name is Katie Guthrie, and I live in Reston, Virginia. I just want to say, everybody sitting here, I've just been listening to everybody say everything. It seems like everybody is looking for someone to blame, something to blame—like the video games, the TV shows, the authorities. But nobody is looking at the kids that are doing it. Why isn't anybody saying, what was wrong with these kids, what was going on in these kids' heads? You know, you can't blame a video game and a movie that thousands of other kids play and, like, deal with every single day for one kid that went and did something. You know, I feel like everything is getting stereotyped here.

Q I think that's a good point, Katie, but I think we also have to talk about the fact that there's so many accidental shootings in this country as well, of kids. So we're not just talking about a few troubled kids.

Q I hate to do this. We're going to have to put a "to be continued" on this, because Presidents and First Ladies have schedules.

THE PRESIDENT: Why don't we stay 10 more minutes and listen to the kids? If you'll let them talk. I want to hear from the kids—

MRS. CLINTON: We could stay longer. I want to hear from them. (Applause.)

Q Okay.

JONATHAN: Mr. President, my name is Jonathan Schnerit and I'm from McLean, Virginia, and I attend Langley High School. And it does seem like it's rather hard to attack all of the people and the kids and the violence. But I talked to Senator Howell from the Virginia State Senate yesterday and she addressed gun control and research by Virginia with smart guns. And from what I understand, they're guns in which the owners are the only people who can fire them because of their fingerprints. And it seems like from all these schools that the guns were stolen from their parents or from other places. I was just curious as to how you stand on this topic.

THE PRESIDENT: First of all, I think it's very important. I think that one of the things we've been trying to do and that the gun manufacturers—and I want to say something positive about the people that are trying to help. The gun manufacturers, most of them, have agreed to work with us and now support legislation to require child trigger locks, which will be somewhat helpful. Now, older children can figure out how to undo them, but still they'll save a lot of accidental deaths, and they're important.

Pretty soon, you will have technology available which you can put into the guns that will raise the costs some in the beginning, like all technology does, but like all technology, the costs will come down quickly, which will mean that only people who have the right fingerprints can fire the gun. And that will be a huge thing.

Then, we'll have to do a lot gun buy-back programs and other things in communities that will increase safety, and it's important.

Q Let's hear from people who haven't spoken.

JEN: Well, everybody's trying to think about like try and pinpoint what is causing this, and obviously that is an impossible task. That's why there's so much debate going on here. But

with all due respect, have you thought about going on this in a positive manner, such as, along with the background checks, require a safety course to be taken? I mean, hunters are required to take a safety course, so why doesn't everybody else who owns a gun have to take a safety course?

Q We should say, by the way, you have—

JEN: I'm from Bethel Park High School and I'm the co-captain of our rifle team. And I had never shot a gun when I walked into practice the first day. The first thing I learned was safety, safety, safety. And I don't see why the first time anybody else picks up a gun it should be any different. I mean, even with all these child-proof locks and these fingerprinted guns, there's still accidental deaths. So if parents are taught gun safety, they can instill it into their kids so that all these accidental shootings will not occur. I mean, a lot of—we have some positive legislation—

THE PRESIDENT: It's one thing that I would like to see the NRA do. When I was Governor of my state, I worked with them and they did a lot of very good work on hunter education programs just like you're talking about, and nobody should have a gun that hasn't been trained to use it. You can't get a driver's license unless you can drive a car, and I completely agree with you about that.

Q Chad?

CHAD: I have a question, Mr. President, I was just wondering why semiautomatic guns and automatic guns and automatic guns and semiautomatic rifles and stuff that are obviously not used for hunting purposes are sold in stores. What purpose do they serve?

THE PRESIDENT: No, but I tried to ban them all in 1994, and we were able to ban 19 kinds of assault weapons. But the people who were against what I was trying to do were able to keep some loopholes in the law, one of which we're closing now, to have these big magazines in the guns, you know, the big clips. And a lot of the imported weapons are still legal. So I spent the last five years trying to get rid of all them. I think they should all be rendered illegal. They also grandfathered in those that were in existence before '94, but I think all of them ought to be taken off the markets. That's what I think. And I'm going to try to keep making progress with Congress to do that.

ELIZABETH: Mr. President, I'm Elizabeth Sutton. I'm from Reston, Virginia, and I attend South Lakes High School. And a moment ago, you said that the technology on guns will raise the prices, and you almost sounded like it was a good thing that those prices would go down. They're raising prices on—

THE PRESIDENT: No, it's a good thing they'll go up.

ELIZABETH: I thought you said that they were—you said, of course, it will go down. I don't think they should go down. I think the price should continue to be raised, like cigarettes—they're being raised and raised and raised to encourage kids not to spend their money on something like that. And I think it's really important to raise it as high as you can, to make it almost impossible for kids to get guns, because there's no excuse for any of what's been going on.

THE PRESIDENT: I agree with you. I didn't mean to—I was just pointing out that when we try to get these things through Congress as requirements, that's one of the things that will always be said. But I think it ought to be—I think this identification thing Jonathan mentioned can make a big difference.

ROBERT: Yes, I'm Robert from Woodrow Wilson. And I was wondering about the toy guns, because I've been looking at TV, I notice that children have been accidentally grabbing actual

guns that they've mistaken as a toy gun. And I've seen the actual toy gun, and it looks just like an actual gun. What are your opinions on that? Don't you think that something needs to be done about toy guns, too? They look too realistic.

MRS. CLINTON: That's a really good point. I know that toys can be regulated by the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and I'll have—we'll carry this message. I'll ask the people over there to give us a report about that, and see if there's anything further they can do.

Q I'd like to ask, if I could, Marc Kramer, to stand up over there, because you've got a story to tell about somebody in this room—

MARC: Yes I do. My name is Marc Kramer. I'm from Chicago. I attend Mount Carmel High School. I'm representing the Hands Without Guns organization in Chicago. And it's an organization for youth violence prevention.

As a factor in my story, I accidentally shot my best friend with a gun that was very easily put into my possession. And, personally, I'm wondering how you feel personally about the background checks on the purchase of guns. Do you personally believe that background checks can honestly prevent guns from falling into wrong hands?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, but it can't prevent all of them. That is, it—we have actual numbers on it. We know how many people we've prevented from getting handguns, because they had criminal records, since we've put it in. But there are so many guns, that it doesn't prevent everybody from getting it.

And one of the real problems is, when children are in places where they have easy access to guns, then you can have what happened—you're a brave guy to be here. Where's your friend? Which one's your friend? You want to say something about this?

MICHAEL: Michael Robbins. I just wanted to know, children getting guns these days and whatever, it's easy to obtain a gun now. If you go and tell an authority that someone you know has a gun in your school, how can you protect yourself from being the victim, if that person finds out you told the authorities?

MRS. CLINTON: That's where I think, Michael, the point that the President made earlier about an anonymous hotline, where you could get that information in without even having to leave your name—would that be better?

MICHAEL: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: See, I went to T.C. Williams High School, right across the river here, where I don't think they have medical—excuse me—metal detectors.

Q It's early. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: It's early. But they have this hotline, they have the student hotline. And if a student there knows that somebody has a gun who shouldn't, they know two things if they call, and both things are important. One is, they know they won't be identified, and two is, they know there will be some responsible person to actually follow up on it. So I think that is something that other schools should consider doing.

Q I've heard of one proposal that schools should be told in advance which homes have guns, so if they spot a troubled kid they know that he's in a home that has a gun. What do you think about that? How would your parents feel about that?

MIKE: My name is Mike Cullen, from Northern Virginia, Fairfax. About what she just said, do you think there's a difference between owning a hunting rifle or a handgun, or is there any way you could tell beforehand if, you know, the penalty should be more for a handgun or assault rifle? Do you think there should be a bigger punishment?

Q And Mike is a hunter.

MIKE: I'm a hunter, by the way. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, a lot of avid sports people would tell you that they do some of that with handguns, too. But generally, yes, I think there's a big difference between assault weapons and other weapons. Some people claim they use them for sporting purposes, but no one needs them. And there is a difference between handguns and other weapons, because handguns are used more, they're easier to conceal and they're more likely to be used for illegal purposes and less likely to be used for legal purposes. Therefore, I think it is legitimate to have higher standards on owning them and greater requirements on background checks and greater requirements on whether they should be registered or not. That's what I believe.

Q Mr. President, if I could, we now have the tyranny of the computer and the clock coming. And we can't thank you both enough for joining us, letting us be here this morning. (Applause.) We appreciate it.

And we'll take a break. We'll take a break. We'll be right back. (Applause.)

END

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HEADLINE: I WOULD HELP UNITE COPS, PEOPLE OF COLOR - HIL

BYLINE: By JOEL SIEGEL DAILY NEWS SENIOR POLITICAL WRITER

BODY:

Saying "New York City obviously has a problem when an innocent unarmed man is gunned down," Hillary Rodham Clinton vowed yesterday to seek a leadership role in trying to prevent another Diallo-type tragedy from occurring.

"My overall objective is to try to be a constructive and positive force in helping to bring people and the city together," said the First Lady and Senate candidate.

She will use a visit to Riverside Church tomorrow to propose ways to narrow the "trust divide" between the police and communities, especially those of color, she said.

Each side must better "understand what it is like to be on the other" so "we can all feel both protected and respected."

"It takes leadership," she said at a curbside news conference, after meeting with gun-control advocates and urging New Yorkers to join her at a Mother's Day Million Mom March in Washington for gun-safety laws.

"I know that we've gotten a lot of mistrust and hostility and anger in the city that doesn't need to be there."

Amadou Diallo, a black immigrant, was killed in a 41-shot barrage fired by four white cops who said they mistook his wallet for a gun. A jury last week acquitted them of all charges.

An adviser said Clinton's planned speech is a natural extension of her campaign theme that she is a leader who brings people together. Critics have said Mayor Giuliani hasn't shown enough leadership in addressing minorities' fears about aggressive policing and racial profiling by cops.

Giuliani has said he's taken steps such as boosting the recruitment of racial- and ethnic-minority cops. His campaign manager, Bruce Teitelbaum, declined to comment.

Asked whether she agreed with minorities who say the city has a police-brutality problem, Clinton said:

"New York City obviously has a problem when an unarmed innocent man is gunned down. . . . We need to take steps to . . . create a climate in which that sort of incident doesn't occur."

"I have looked all over this country and I have worked on these issues for a very long time, and there are cities where the crime rate has gone down and where relations between people of color and the police have improved at the same time," she said.

She said she supports the Justice Department's inquiry into whether to file civil rights charges against the cops. But she said that as a lawyer, she has no opinion on whether charges should be filed. She said she does not know whether President Clinton is involved in the department's decision-making on the issue.

GRAPHIC: COREY SIPKIN DAILY NEWS WORK IN PROGRESS At midtown press conference yesterday, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton says she'll propose ways to prevent Diallo-type shootings.

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The Associated Press State & Local Wire

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SECTION: State and Regional

LENGTH: 546 words

HEADLINE: Hillary Clinton: Feds should investigate Diallo killing

BYLINE: By BETH GARDINER, Associated Press Writer

DATELINE: NEW YORK

BODY:

Hillary Rodham Clinton is inching forward in her comments about the Amadou Diallo killing, saying she supports a federal investigation into the unarmed immigrant's death at the hands of police but cannot comment on whether a civil rights prosecution is merited.

"The Justice Department should look into it and should make a decision as to whether or not it will proceed," she told reporters Friday. "And that's up to the Justice Department to decide."

Clinton had previously declined to say whether she thought federal investigators should look into the Diallo case. The four officers who shot at Diallo 41 times were acquitted by an Albany jury last week, angering many New Yorkers and prompting calls for a federal civil rights prosecution.

The first lady spoke cautiously Friday, and did not say whether she thought the officers should be prosecuted again.

"This is a decision that is going to be made by the people who should be making it," she said, explaining that Justice Department lawyers would look carefully at the facts of the case.

Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder met in Washington, D.C., Thursday with Diallo's parents and other supporters, who pressed the Justice Department to take on the case. Holder made no guarantee that charges would be sought and said in a statement that "the standard to proceed in federal court is high."

The first lady spoke after meeting in midtown Manhattan with leaders of the gun control group PAX, founded by Daniel Gross, whose brother Matthew was badly injured in a 1997 shooting atop the Empire State Building.

Clinton's focus on guns came in the wake of a 6-year-old Michigan girl's death Tuesday at the hands of a 6-year-old classmate. The tragedy has brought new attention to the gun control debate, and President Clinton sought to rally support this week for legislation requiring gun safety locks and gun show background checks.

Hillary Clinton said she plans to participate in a Million Mom March planned for Washington, D.C., on Mother's Day to urge tougher gun laws.

"I would invite thousands and thousands of New Yorkers to join this march calling on Congress to make the tough decisions to protect our children," she said.

Asked whether New York has a problem with police brutality - a heated issue in recent days - she replied, "New York City obviously has a problem when an innocent unarmed man is gunned down. ... We need to take steps to make sure that never happens again."

She did not specify what should be done, but called for greater understanding between residents and police and indicated she would talk more about the issue in a speech at Riverside Church on Sunday. Many black and Hispanic New Yorkers have accused the police of racial profiling and said officers are too ready to use violence against minorities.

"I'm very convinced that we can continue to decrease the crime rate and increase the trust rate in New York," she said. "There is a lot that we could do with the right kind of leadership, that brings people together and reaches out to try to understand what it's like to be on the other side. ... I hope that our efforts can help to ... bring those who are committed to protecting us together with people who need protection and also deserve respect."

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: March 5, 2000

TRANSCRIPT IN PROGRESS

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
ANTI-VIOLENCE EVENT
FISHER MIDDLE SCHOOL
EWING, NEW JERSEY
JUNE 10, 1999

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much Ameerah. Thank you for coming and being with us today and reminding us of what the personal cost and the loss and the pain is from the statistics that we sometimes see. It is easy to forget that behind all of these statistics, all these stories about people who are shot, accidentally or deliberately. There are the lives of Ameerah's late brother and there are probably people that you know who have also suffered. It is hard sometimes to come before a big group and talk about something that hurts as much as her loss, but I am very grateful that she did do so and I want to thank her again for sharing that story with us. Thank you, Ameerah. Ameerah has taken the right lesson from her terrible tragedy and instead of pulling back and being overwhelmed by the loss of her brother, she's dedicated herself to helping others to end violence everywhere and I am very grateful for that example.

There are many who are standing with you, Ameerah, the Peacemakers who are here in the auditorium, the congressman who just addressed you, many people who know that we have to do more to help protect young people and to help you protect yourselves. I want to thank your school superintendent, Timothy Wade, for his leadership. And I want to thank your principal, Warren Schuster, for his. I'm particularly grateful to the people that Mr. Schuster introduced. Mrs. Davis, I want to thank you and I want to thank the other counselors and teachers who've been a part of this effort. I want to recognize also the P.T.O. president, Joyce Thompson and your Mayor, Alfred Bridges, because what we have here in this auditorium is a partnership among people. Those who are in public office, like your mayor, those who are in positions of responsibility in your school system, and you, the students here, starting with your student body president, and I want to thank you for your very fine address, Tyrus.

It was very important what Congressman Holt had to say. Because he has been in Congress in Washington, working very hard to try to get people to put down their particular points of view and to come together to try to do what is necessary to help keep our schools, our streets, our communities, and our homes safe.

We've heard a lot today and over the last several weeks about youth violence, and the terrible toll that it has taken, but we've also begun to hear a lot about what is being accomplished in schools and in other places around our country to stop the conditions that breed violence, to help young people who have problems get the assistance they need, to solve problems before they get out of control.

I got a copy of a poem that Alicia Davis wrote as part of her work as a member of the Peacemakers Club, and I really liked that. I really liked what Alysha had to say and I want to read this to you. She wrote, "When will we stop judging and pointing our fingers in blame; when will we stop seeing differences, and realize that inside, we're all the same."

We've come together today in part to answer Alicia's question. To talk about concrete, positive steps we can take together. To talk about the values that should bring us together, to talk about how we make a commitment to the places where we go to school, or where we work, or where we live, and to talk further about how to make a commitment in the midst of our very busy lives to take time enough to listen to each other, to work to try to make sure guns don't fall in the right hands, to protect children from seeing too much violence and there-by thinking that maybe it's all unreal, so what would it matter if they themselves were involved in violence?

You know, there isn't any one single answer or solution to the problem of violence in America today. We all have a lot of work to do. From the President of the United States to the president of the student body, from teachers and business leaders, from members of Congress, people who put out media, whether it's movies or tv programs or video games or the internet, to each of us individually. Every one of us has something we can do to try to create a more peaceful world.

Now if we think about what we can do as parents, or religious leaders, or law enforcement officials, or gun manufacturers, or young people even, then I believe we can begin to see some real progress.

Just a few weeks ago, we had a big meeting at the White House that the President called and there were students there as well as people who make guns and make movies. There were religious leaders and elected officials. There were all kinds of Americans representing all the rest of us. And we decided at that meeting that we needed a national campaign against youth violence that would give something to all of us to do. Kind of like the effort called Mothers Against Drunk Driving which changed the idea of whether it's really okay to drink and drive because it's one thing to drink, it's another thing to get behind the wheel of an automobile that could kill somebody if you can't control it. So we've saved a lot of lives because of that campaign and we're just beginning to put this national campaign against youth violence together, and I need your help and your ideas about how to make it work.

I wanted to come to the Congressman to this school because of what you have done here this past year. From what I've heard about the Peacemaker's Club and what you've accomplished, I know it's a program that I would like to see in more schools.

The values you're learning as members of this club are the values that we need to be reminded of as Americans. How do you respect each other's differences? How do you listen to each other? How do you take responsibility for your own actions? How do you work with people that you may not get along with, may not really like, may not even know very well? But you're all in this together. You've not only become an example to yourselves and other people here in this part of New Jersey, but word of what you've done has certainly made it to the White House and to the Congress. There are the basic rules about how you get along with people,

aren't there? You know, we can't all have everything we want every day. If we're going to be able to get along so that we have an atmosphere of cooperation and good feeling that enables all of us to be able to do more of what we want to do ourselves.

I'd like to ask those of you who have been peer mediators to stand. Anyone who's been a peer mediator, I'd like to see all of you stand. Thank you. Thank you for serving in that important role because, you know, most of us at some point or another in our own lives, we need somebody to step in and help us work out a problem, don't we? We need somebody to say, "Hey, back off. Cool down. Think about this. Count to ten." And in schools where peer mediators work, the level of argument and problems and violence goes way down. So I think that that was one of the important steps that you took here that I would like to see schools everywhere doing. I also think that it's important that all of you have a safe place to go to report problems that bother you. And sometimes when I talk to young people around our country, they say, "You know, I knew that he or she was kind of in a bad way, but I didn't know who to tell."

Last week at the White House, the President and I spoke with about 40 teenagers from around America and there was one boy from Conyers(???), Georgia who came and you may remember that after Littleton, we had a young man in Conyers, Georgia walk into the school, thank goodness no one was killed, but he wounded a few people. And the young man who came to the White House said, "You know, he said something weird to me one day. You know, I was there on the school grounds and he called me over and he said, 'I got a gun in my backpack.'" And he said, "I was really upset and I didn't know what to do so, you know, I went and I told somebody, but the next day when they questioned him, he didn't have the gun in the backpack and nothing happened. And then a few days later, of course, he came back with his gun." So this young man who was telling us this said, "You know, we need when we tell somebody, because it's hard to tell somebody when it's somebody you know in school and you don't want to be, you know, viewed on as a snitch or whatever, we got to have somebody that we can tell that we know will take action."

So one of the ideas that we're trying to promote is that certainly tell the adults, tell the counselors, but if for some reason you can't do that, we need a place where you can tell anonymously if you know somebody who's talking about hurting themselves. You know, if any of your friends, any of your friends, ever says, "I wish I were dead. I'm gonna kill myself." You've got to tell somebody. You've got to help that person. Get somebody to listen who maybe can help them. Now we all say things that we don't mean, but if you think that he or she is serious about it, you've got to do it. If anybody says, "I could just kill that person, or I hate that person, or I can't stand that kinda person, I wish I could kill them, or blow them up, or something like that; you've got to take that seriously too, and you've got to find a way to tell somebody about your concerns. And one of the ideas we have is to put in hotlines so that you can call and leave information anonymously if that's what you need to do.

I'd like to ask a couple of questions just for my own information. How many of you have ever known anybody who's brought a weapon to school, this school. How many of you have ever known anybody who's ever brought a weapon to any school? How many of you have ever known anyone personally who's ever been wounded or killed by gunshots? How many of you have ever been told by somebody that they're really upset and that they want to kill

somebody? How many of you have ever taken the threats that you've heard or seen so seriously that you've told some adult about them? How many of you would feel more comfortable letting an adult know that somebody was, in your opinion, maybe going to hurt themselves or somebody else, if you could tell an adult anonymously? How many of you have had an experience where you feel that you don't have anywhere to go yourself; you've got a problem, maybe it's a problem at home, maybe it's a problem at school, and you just don't know where to go to get some help for dealing with it? How many of you have had the experience, maybe with a younger brother or sister, watching a violent tv show or a violent video show and feeling like it was getting just a little out of control there was just too much. It was making you feel funny and pushing you too hard? How many of you have played those video games where you win if you kill people? How many of you have ever thought that it was okay for you to play those games because you could deal with it and control it, but maybe there are people you know who aren't as strong as you are and could get a little bit weird about it? How many of you worry about what your younger brothers or sisters see on tv, or in the movies, or on the internet, or in the video games?

Well you know, these are all questions that I really appreciate your answering because they're questions that our entire country has to ask and answer because we've got to figure out how to have in every school a situation like the Peacemakers and better connections between adults and students, between parents and schools, so that we can give you the support you need and be there when you need us. We also need to figure out how to help you give us information that we might need to help somebody or to stop somebody that doesn't get you into any kind of problem or difficulty. And those are some of the issues that we're looking at. To try to figure out how we can help create a better situation so that the next time I, or somebody like me, comes to a school like this, we don't have so many hands going up. You know I'd like to think that maybe in five or ten years when you all are adults and you're looking back you can say, "Well, you know, I raised my hand that day that Mrs. Clinton asked the question, but thank goodness now that I'm a parent, or I'm concerned about what goes on, those aren't problems like they used to be.

One of the biggest problems we've got is how many guns there are in our country. Now we have about, oh I don't know, maybe 265,000,000 people in America and we have probably 250,000,000 guns. There are so many guns. And those guns are too easy for people to get ahold of.

You know sometimes when you're upset about something or mad at somebody, which happens to all of us, it takes awhile to blow off steam. But if you're just really upset and it just kinda comes over you and you have access to a weapon, you may do something that you will regret for the rest of your life. I mean I've talked to teenagers who've picked up a weapon in anger. I've talked to teenagers who've fooled around with weapons that accidentally discharged, killing their best friends or wounding them. I've talked to a lot of teenagers who've lost brothers or sisters to deliberate or accidental gunfire. And if the guns just weren't so readily available, we would save lives and we know that we have with the gun legislation that was passed back in 1994, but now we have to do more.

That's why I'm pleased to support Congressman Holt's efforts to try to strengthen our gun control laws. He has helped us to focus attention nationwide on what needs to be done, but we've got to do more. Now you might ask yourselves, "Okay, well, why don't we just do it?" The President said he wants to do it. We passed good gun legislation in the Senate with just one vote that was championed by your Senior Senator, Senator Lautenberg(???). Why doesn't it just happen? Well, the reason it doesn't "just happen" is because there are some very powerful groups in our country led by the National Rifle Association, you know, the NRA, which does the ads and advocates their positions so strongly. They have convinced enough members of Congress that if they vote for gun control they'll lose their jobs because the NRA will come in and they'll give a bunch of money and support to someone who runs against them. And that's the way the political process works. If people feel that one issue is very important, then that's the way they'll vote if they don't hear from people on the other side. And as the Congressman said, the NRA and those that are against sensible, reasonable gun control legislation, are very well organized. They're a small minority, but they're very well organized. And the rest of the people are not.

So one of the things that I hope you will do in support of what the Congressman said is to make sure that your members of Congress know that we're not talking about taking people's guns away, we are talking about preventing criminals and felons and people with histories of violence and mental illness to avoid getting a gun, and we're trying to keep guns out of the hands of teenagers and gang members, but we want sensible gun control legislation. And if you can let members of Congress know that, it would make a big difference because right now, there is legislation coming to the floor of the House that will determine whether or not we close some loop-holes and try to prevent what happened in Littleton from guns getting into the hands of young people who should not have had them.

This is an important issue for your future, for your safety, and for the well-being of our entire country. So let me thank you for being part of Peacemakers and for understanding what it takes to "Increase the Peace." Let me thank you for working to understand each other and respect each other because you're from all different kinds of backgrounds, you come from all different sorts of experiences. And here in America, we have to learn how to work together.

I was thinking about coming here today in light of the peace agreement that has been signed affecting Kosovo and when the NATO commanders negotiated those terms with the Yugoslav generals, they made it very clear that there had to be safe passage and security for the Kosovar refugees to return home. And I thought back to when I went to Bosnia, now in Bosnia, after the end of that terrible conflict, I was able to meet, on a military base controlled by the United States military, with people who were Muslims and Croates, and Serbs. Now unlike this crowd, they all looked the same, but they had different religious beliefs and different ethnic backgrounds, but it would have been hard for someone like me to tell you who was a Serb or a Croate or a Muslim. And in talking with them, what they told me was that they used to get along but then, all of a sudden, it was in the interests of Mr. Milosevic, his political interests, to try to foment hatred and discord between them. So he began putting it out in the media that one group wanted what another group had, that one group couldn't trust another group. And people got really agitated and upset and they began to turn on their neighbors and pretty soon you had a

terrible situation where men were killed, where women were raped, families were separated, houses were burned because all of a sudden, people who had gotten along peacefully, felt fear toward one another. I remember talking to a woman on this military base, and I can't to this day tell you which of those categories she fell into, but she said that one day some neighbors came and said she had to leave because she was of the wrong ethnic origin. So she was going to have to leave even though her family had lived there for generations. And when she said to her neighbors, "Why? Why are you doing this? We've gone to each others' weddings, we've cried at each other's funerals. Why would you do this?" The answer was, "Because we're told if we don't do it to you, you'll do it to us."

Shortly after that conversation, I went out to meet some of our troops, some of the men and women in uniform who were there as peacekeepers. And as I met those American peacekeepers and I would shake their hands, I saw every shade of color in their faces. I heard every single kind of accent. And as I looked on the name strip I saw every sort of ethnic origin of every name that you could imagine here in the United States. And I thought to myself, "You know, I wish I could take every American teenager with me when I travel to places like Bosnia so they could see what we are trying to accomplish here, and that is figure out ways to get along with each other, to respect each other, and live in peace. That's what you're doing in this school and I thank you for the example you are setting. Thank you all very much."

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

June 1, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AND MRS. CLINTON ON CHILDREN, VIOLENCE AND MARKETING

The Rose Garden

11:46 A.M. EDT

MRS. CLINTON: Good morning, and please be seated, and thank you for joining us today in the Rose Garden as we continue a national conversation about how to address the problems of youth violence in our communities and schools.

I want to thank everyone for coming this morning, and I'd like to acknowledge Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Mayor Deedee Corradini, Mayor Timothy Kaine, and County Executives Wayne Curry and Charles Ruppertsburger. In addition to the Chairman of the FTC, whom you will hear from in a minute, Robert Pitofsky, we also have Commissioner Sheila Anthony and Commissioner Mozelle Thompson. I'm also pleased that Pamela Eakes, who led the very innovative group, Mothers Against Violence in America, has worked with us on this event as she has on past events that are also part of our efforts to try to create ways in which every American can take his or her part in doing whatever we can against youth violence.

As a nation, we've reacted to the shootings at Columbine High School like almost no other event I can remember in recent memory. It has literally pierced the heart of America. Yet, in my conversations with young people and parents over the past few weeks, I've heard less talk about people feeling helpless or hopeless and more about a growing consensus that finger-pointing doesn't lead to solutions and that we have to move forward together to take steps to end the violence, not only in our schools, but in our broader community. And that it is time—some might say past time—that we all play a role in making a positive difference in the lives of our children.

I want to thank the Attorney General and the Chair of the FTC for joining us today, as well as the many parents, educators, religious leaders, members of the media and students who are here as well. I'm pleased that we will be hearing from a 4th grader this morning who will tell us how he became part of the solution in his home state of Washington.

I think all of us recognize that there is no single answer or solution to the problem of violence in our society, but that we must move on many fronts—from passing common-sense gun control efforts to helping parents understand better how to exercise authority over the media that their children are exposed to, and enabling more parents to spend more time with their own children.

We've come together to talk about some of the ways we can begin to reverse the culture of violence that is engulfing American children every day, particularly the role that the media plays in shaping the lives and values of our children and young people.

In 1972, a Surgeon General report said, and I quote: "We know that children imitate and learn from everything they see—parents, fellow children, school, the media. It would be extraordinary, indeed, if they did not imitate and learn from what they see on television."

The report went on to say that violence on television causes children either to mimic directly the actions they see or to act generally in a more aggressive way. Yet, today, more than 25 years after this report was written, our culture is even more saturated with TV programs, movies and songs that romanticize and glorify violence. What kind of values are we promoting when a child can walk into a store and find video games where you win based on how many people you can kill or how many places you can blow up.

We can no longer ignore the well-documented connection between violence in the media and the effects that it has on children's behavior. One study has found, for example, that if an actor is rewarded for violent behavior, children are more likely to imitate it. Another tells us that media violence has a particularly negative effect on children who already have a tendency toward aggressive or antisocial behavior.

According to the American Psychiatric Association, viewers of violence not only become desensitized and fearful, they begin to identify with an aggressive solution to their own personal problems. America's culture of violence is having a profound effect on our children, and we have to resolve to do all we can to change that culture.

One of the ways we can do that is to give parents the tools they need to control what their own children are exposed to. And we've already moved forward in that direction. Today's announcement is another important step in the fight against violence. We know there is a lot of work to be done. But I'm encouraged that so many leaders and citizens are coming together and talking honestly not only about the challenges we face, but what we have to do, together, to meet those challenges.

I'm particularly heartened that as a result of the meeting the President convened at the White House a few weeks ago, there was general agreement from a broad cross-section of Americans that we would launch a national grass roots campaign to prevent youth violence. We would model the campaign on successful national efforts like Mothers Against Drunk Driving, which showed us that we can change the culture when enough people from all walks of life say enough is enough. So I look forward to seeing everyone working together on this new nationwide effort to prevent youth violence.

Now, I'd like to introduce someone who cares deeply about the future of our children and who has fought tirelessly to create safe schools and communities. Our Attorney General, Janet Reno. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Give him another hand. He was great.

Bravo. (Applause.) Thank you.

When I was listening to Arthur speak, I didn't know whether to offer him a job as a White House speechwriter -- (laughter) -- or just wait for the opportunity to vote for him someday. Let me say -- (applause) -- thank you very much. Thank you.

And we thank your mother for bringing you here, and congratulations. (Applause.) And Representative Mary Lou Dickerson, thank you; and Pam Eakes, founder of Mothers Against Violence in America, thank you.

I thank the Attorney General, and Chairman Pitofsky, for their remarks and their commitment. I thank Mayor Corradini, Mayor Kaine, County Executive Curry and County Executive Dutch Ruppersburger for the interest that our local government leaders have. I thank Representative Sheila Jackson Lee for her passionate commitment to this issue. And, all of you, welcome to the White House.

And most of all, I want to say again how much I appreciate Arthur Sawe for coming here, and for sharing a child's perspective. We have other children in this audience today, and we are really here about them, and their future.

As Hillary said, the tragedy at Littleton had a profound effect on America. It certainly had a profound effect on us, and on our family—particularly after we had the chance to go to Colorado and visit with the families of the children who were killed, and many of the young children who are still grievously wounded—and the kids at the school with them, who are hurting still, and the teachers.

I do think that what Hillary said is right: we sense a determination, not only in that community but throughout our country, not just to grieve about this, but to do something about it. The national grassroots campaign against violence against children is rooted in our faith that we can do better.

We know we can prevent more youth violence if we work together, across all the lines that divide us. We know we can do it if we're all willing to assume responsibility, and stop trying to assign blame. Of course, the responsibility begins at home. It must be reinforced and supported at schools and houses of worship in the community as a whole. Those of us in public service must also do our part. There is broad and growing consensus for us to do more.

Let me say I am also very grateful that the gun manufacturers came here last month and voiced their support for common-sense restrictions to make it more difficult for guns to get into the hands of children and criminals. I'm encouraged that the Senate acted to close the deadly gun show loophole, to require safety locks to be sold with every handgun, to ban the importation of large-capacity ammunition clips, and ban violent juveniles from owning guns as adults. I hope the House of Representatives will pass these common-sense measures as soon as they return

from the Memorial Day recess. (Applause.) We have a lot to do this year, but this should be put at the top of the agenda, and not put on hold.

As you have already heard, members of the entertainment industry must also do their part. They, and the rest of us, cannot kid ourselves. Our children are being fed a dependable daily dose of violence—and it sells. Now, 30 years of studies have shown that this desensitizes our children to violence, and to the consequences of it.

We now know that by the time the typical American child reaches the age of 18, he or she has seen 200,000 dramatized acts of violence, and 40,000 dramatized murders. Kids become attracted to it, and more numb to its consequences. As their exposure to violence grows, so, in some deeply troubling cases of particularly vulnerable children, does the taste for it. We should not be surprised that half the video games a typical seventh-grader plays are violent.

Anyone who doubts the impact of the cultural assault can look at what now, over 30 years, amounts to somewhere over 300 studies, all of whom show that there is a link between sustained exposure, hour after hour, day after day, week after week, year after year, to violent entertainment and violent behavior.

What the studies say, quite simply, is that the boundary between fantasy and reality violence, which is a clear line for most adults, can become very blurred for vulnerable children. Kids steeped in the culture of violence do become desensitized to it and more capable of committing it themselves.

That is why I have strongly urged people in the entertainment industry to consider the consequences of what they create and how they advertise it. One can value the First Amendment right to free speech and at the same time care for and act with restraint. Our administration has worked to give parents more tools to protect their kids, to block violent programming from entering their living room with the V-chip and the rating system. We've made progress on parental screening for Internet and ratings for Internet game sites.

Still, when violent entertainment made for adults is marketed to children, it undermines the rating system designed to protect them. And if you look at some of these ads, it's hard to argue with a straight face that the games were made for adults in the first place. Like the one Arthur mentioned.

Advertisements have a particular role here. They have the power to egg children on and lure them in. Every parent knows what response a commercial for sugar cereal or the latest Star Wars toy will get from their children. People advertise because it works. They want that product and, one way or the other, they're determined to get it. So we ought to think twice about the impact of ads for so-called "first person shooter video games," like the recent ad for a game that invites players to—and I quote—"get in touch with your gun-toting, cold-blooded murdering side."

I was given—today, Arthur brought me the magazine with the ad that he mentioned, and he was kind enough to mark it for me. There really is a gun here. It says: More fun than shooting your neighbor's cat. I was given another ad that says:

What kind of psycho drives a school bus into a war zone? And here's a school bus, heavily armed. This came out right after the incident in Springfield, Oregon.

Here's an ad that turns the argument I just made on its head: Psychiatrists say it's important to feel something when you kill. And then it goes on to say, you ought to get this technology because it bumps and you feel it. It says: Every sensation, every vibration, every mutilation, nine programmable weapons buttons. Customizable feedback software. Push the stick that pushes back and feel your pain. And here's one that's the most unbelievable of all. It says: Kill your friends guilt-free.

Now, obviously, Arthur has the inner strength and the good upbringing to reject that kind of violent appeal. Most of our children do. But not all of our children do. We cannot be surprised when this kind of thing has an impact on our most vulnerable children. Is it 100 percent to blame? No. It's easier to get guns in this society. Parents on average spend 22 hours a week less with their children than they did 30 years ago because of the demands of work and commuting, the busyness of daily life.

But when you put it all together, there are bound to be explosive negative consequences. That's why today I am asking the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission to study the extent to which the video game, music and movie markets do actually market violence to children, and whether those industries are abiding by their own voluntary systems of regulations.

To any company that sells violent products, I say, children are more than consumers. I understand nobody made anybody buy any of this stuff. But every day, a responsible society declines to do some things for short-term gain that it can do. And that is what we have to think about. These children are our future, our most precious resource. Raising them is any society's most important job.

Don't make young people want what your own rating systems say they shouldn't have. I might say again, as has already been acknowledged, they shouldn't have. I might say again, as has already been acknowledged, many, many people in the entertainment industry have worked with us on this—on the ratings system, on the V-chip, on the screening technology for the Internet.

I noticed one network executive, a few days ago, actually cancelled a program because its violent content was inappropriate, and I applaud that. But I also read with concern the news that some of the new programming coming up for this fall on some networks will be even more violent than last year's. The time has come to show some restraint, even if it has a short-term impact on the bottom line.

I also want to challenge the owners of movie theaters and video stores, distributors—anyone at any point of sale—enforce the rating systems on the products that you sell. Check the IDs, draw the line. If underage children are buying violent video games or getting into R-rated movies, the rating system should be enforced to put a stop to it. (Applause.)

And if, as many of us suspect, there is still too much gratuitous violence in PG-13-rated movies, the rating systems themselves should be re-evaluated.

I want to thank Senators Brownback, Lieberman, Hatch and Kohl, for the bipartisan work they have done on this issue. Again, I want to commend State Representative Mary Lou Dickerson from Washington, who read about young Arthur, helped to create a task force on video game violence, and thanks to her work with Pam and the Mothers Against Violence in America and the Washington Retailers' Association—who are all represented here today—video game

retailers in Washington state now voluntarily sign a pledge to parents, committing themselves to check IDs and block sales of violent games to minors. That's something that ought to happen in every state in the United States of America. (Applause.)

Again I say, we can do something about this. It will take a grass roots campaign. It will take everybody doing his or her part. This is a problem we face together, a problem America can solve together. There is no more urgent task for our future.

You were all looking at this young man speaking today, thinking, what a wonderful thing that a person that young could speak so clearly, so confidently, about things that are so right. You look around at the other young people here today who are involved in this effort in some way or another, and you thank God that we have this legacy of children.

A lot of those kids that haven't made it through all these school violence incidents were just as good, just as fine, had just as much to give the world. We've got to quit fooling around with this. We've got a chance. Our hearts are open, our ears are open, are heads are thinking.

I know this stuff sells. But that doesn't make it right.

Thank you, and God bless you. (Applause.)

12:16 P.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

National Day of Mourning and Protest of the Los Angeles Hate Killing
Statement from First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
August 26, 1999

I want to commend all of you gathered tonight to honor U.S. postal worker Joseph Iletto and the other victims of the shootings that took place in Los Angeles on August 10. People all over our country have expressed their outrage at these senseless tragedies -- and our thoughts and prayers are with all the victims and their families.

As a nation, we simply cannot tolerate hate crimes and gun violence. Americans should never be the target of hatred because of who they are, or where they worship, or where they were born. And children should never have to worry about the gun violence that too often plagues our schools, our homes and our communities.

We must always remember that our differences -- be they race or religion, gender or sexual orientation -- will never be stronger than the common humanity that unites us all. It is my hope that the collective sadness and anger that we all feel as a result of these crimes will motivate us to address the scourge of gun violence and hate crimes in America. And when we do, it will be because citizens like you stood up, spoke out and led the way.

Hillary Rodham Clinton for U. S. Senate
Exploratory Committee, Inc.
Suite 600
1300 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-887-6726 (phone)
202-223-0358 (fax)

8.25.99

#2

To: Ann Lewis

Ann - What do you think about
getting a statement from HRC
for this? Haw

Need tomorrow, if it is to be useful

Ann - I forgot to attach
the flyer

I am not so sure we should
do anything?

Haw

AALDEF

problems? call 212-966-5932

8/23/99

012:27 AM

1/2

From: AALDEF

Total number of pages: 2



To: Samara Rifkin, Hilary 2000

Monday, August 23, 1999

TO: Samara Rifkin/ Howard Wolfson:

Hello Samara. Glad to hear things are going well. As per our discussion, following is our flyer for the event on Thursday. CNN, along with ☐☐☐☐☐ Cardinal O'Connor, have express interest in attending. But we'll see...

We would the love for the First Lady to give a written ☐☐ a statement. Maybe Loida Nicolas Lewis can read it. If not, one of our key organizers can.

Please FAX it to me by this Wednesday morning, Aug. 25th. Fax to ☐ AALDEF at 212-966-4303. Call me at 212-966-5932 if you have any questions. Thanks.

-Glenn Magpantay

Vigil, Speak Out, & Memorial Service

Featured Speakers:

Ben Ito
Uncle of Joseph Ito

Loida Nicolas Lewis
Nat'l Federation of Filipino
American Associations

Hazel N. Dukes
NAACP

Melanie Kaya/Kantrowitz
Jews for Racial &
Economic Justice

Father Erno Diaz, Celebrant
Filipino Apostolate

Organizational Speakers/Statements:

Anti-Defamation League • Arkipelago •
Asian Amer. for Equality • Asian Pac.
Amer. Labor Alliance • Asian Amer. Legal
Defense & Ed. Fund • Asian Pacific Is.
Center on HIV/AIDS • Audre Lorde Proj.
• CAAAM, Organizing Asian Communities
• Center for Constitutional Rights •
Firestorm: State Pride Agenda • Filipino
Amer. Human Services • Filipino Civil
Rights Advocates • Japanese Amer.
Citizens League • Jewish Comm.
Relations Council • Nat'l Asian Pac. Amer.
Bar Assn. • Nat'l Assoc. of Lawyer
Centers • Nat'l Korean Amer. Service &
Ed. Consortium • NYC Central Library
Council • Philippine Nurses Assoc. •
Rabbi Yael Weiberg • State Senator Tim
Dwyer • Young Korean Amer. Service &
Ed. Center • Young Koreans United

National Day of Mourning & Protest of the Los Angeles Hate Killing

Joseph Ito, a 39-year old Filipino American
postal worker, was murdered and five people,
including four children, were wounded at the
Jewish Community Center by a white suprema-
cist in Los Angeles on August 10th.

We will join together for:

- Joseph Ito and the Victims at the Jewish
Community Center
- passage of the Federal Hate Crimes Prevention Act
- passage of the New York State Hate Crimes Bill
- Unity and Solidarity among all peoples: Filipinos
and Asian Americans, People of Color, Jews, Religious
Minorities, Women, Lesbian/Gay/Bisexuals, and Workers.

Thursday, August 26

6:00 p.m. Vigil

**7:00 p.m. Memorial
Service**

Epiphany Church

E. 22nd St. & 2nd Ave., Manhattan

DONATIONS FOR THE FAMILY WILL BE ACCEPTED

Ernest M. Villanar, FICRA 212-423-0672

Usher LA Magpantay, AALDEF 212-966-5932; LA_Magpantay@ardc.com

Chris Paskin-Layman, AAFEC 718-539-7290; christopher_paskinlayman@yahoo.com

Filipino Civil Rights Advocates (FICRA) • Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)
Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ) • Arkipelago • Filipino American Human Services, Inc. (FAHSI)