

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

95 DEC 16 P3:30

December 14, 1995

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHIEF OF STAFF

FROM: Rahm Emanuel *R.E.*
Bruce Reed *B.R.*

SUBJECT: Anti-Crime Communication

The Clinton Administration is the first Democratic administration since President Kennedy to establish a credible anti-crime record. The public views the President as strong and as credible as the Republicans in fighting crime. This has been accomplished because of our legislative record and consistent communications.

Parity with the Republicans should not be assumed as a given. Historically, the GOP has had anywhere from a 20-25% advantage in the area of fighting crime. Ever since the Nixon Administration's much publicized 'Law and Order' Campaign, the GOP has enjoyed a significant advantage in this area.

Over the last 25 years, the GOP has relied on three issues to defeat Democratic Presidential ambitions. The constellation of issues the GOP has used to great advantage against Democrats has been weak on communism, crime, and taxes. As recently as the 1988 Presidential campaign, we saw how the GOP effectively used crime to portray the Democratic nominee as out of step with mainstream America.

In the last three years, under President Clinton's leadership, Democrats have effectively wrestled back control of the crime issue. In part because of the President's strong positions and in part because of GOP mistakes.

The GOP has allowed themselves to be led by the NRA in the same way Democrats allowed ourselves to be led by the ACLU. A narrow special interest has gained the upper hand over the GOP and has dictated party policy. This has enabled Democrats to gain control of America's mainstream and punish the GOP for being tied to an extremist special interest (i.e. the NRA).

The Clinton Administration can be accused of courting one special interest group in the area of crime, America's Police Officers. The administration has not allowed a shed of light to ever emerge between the administration and police groups. No one group has

provided the Administration with greater cover and credibility in the area of crime than the major police groups.

Having achieved so much in the last three years, we must not rest on our laurels. Although we have erased years of weakness in the area of crime, Democrats still carry a burden of doubt with the public. In addition, the public does not believe the problem of crime has been solved. Any communication by the administration that this issue has been dealt with or solved will only further alienate the public and depict us as out of touch with their daily concerns.

In short, the Administration needs to maintain regular communication and develop new crime fighting initiatives. If for no other reason than that it reminds the public of our record and it communicates that we understand the problem they face on a daily basis. In the most recent Gallop and Times Mirror surveys, crime and drugs are rated at the top of the public's concerns.

Building upon our anti-crime record, the Administration should focus on three areas: juvenile violence, drug abuse, and the criminal justice system. These specific areas of the crime problem are real, we can do something about them, and the public perceives them as primary.

JUVENILE VIOLENCE:

Over the last four months there has been a steady stream of national reports and studies indicating that crime is declining, but that random juvenile violence is on its way up.

To confront this problem the Administration's efforts should focus on tougher prosecution of juveniles, declare war on the top ten gangs in the same manner that Robert Kennedy declared war on the mob, and be seen tackling the growing violence in and around schools.

In each area we have begun to build a credible record, but our rhetoric and actions have fallen short of the actual size of the problem. The U.S. Attorneys have filed indictments against major gangs, but it has been haphazard and episodic at best. What is worse the AG has not been involved so there is no tie to the President or the administration's crime fighting efforts.

Two immediate corrective actions can begin to put the administration on the right course. First, a Presidential speech declaring war on the 10 top gangs in America noting that their best days are behind them and that we will cripple them like we have crippled the mob. This type of speech has never occurred, would bring focus to our efforts, and tie past and future actions by US Attorney's to a Presidential initiative.

Second, we must begin to force the AG to be present at the announcement of major gang indictments. The Bush White House used this very effectively when they attacked white collar crime in the stock market and exchanges of Chicago. The AG needs to stop fighting the battle for the crime bill and begin to fight the battle against crime.

The Justice Department has developed legislation for the enhanced prosecution of Juvenile Offenders. Although the legislation is good and needs to be done, no one should kid themselves that this will affect crime like the 100,000 cops program.

To lend credibility, it should be linked to a challenge to states to adopt tougher laws. Justice is developing, and has nearly completed, a model for state juvenile crime legislation. The President can advocate states to adopt such legislation.

The Administration's record on violence in schools is probably the strongest of the three youth crime issues. Last year, we passed the youth hand-gun ban, zero tolerance for guns in school, and introduced revised language for gun-free schools zone act.

This should all be augmented with a program to place a cop in every school, police youth academies, and a strong position on school uniforms. The memo Bruce did on '96 initiatives outlines the policy further.

DRUGS:

In the area of building a credible anti-crime profile for the President, drugs is our achilles heal. We have never established any credibility in the war on drugs. The President has spoken on this issue often with no real impact. This is the one issue on the domestic front that the President carries a higher than normal burden of proof.

The focus of the President's future communications on drugs should be about altering people's behavior. The victory in the court case to drug test high-school athletes gives the administration a record to build upon. We should pursue mandatory drug testing for criminals, deliver a major speech touting the new drug testing technology for home use, and drug testing for professional athletes.

In addition to drug testing, the President can endorse the idea Rev. Jesse Jackson has been pushing that each church adopt an addict. Part of the program Rev. Jackson has pushed has a very strong values component.

The most important action we can take in blocking future GOP attacks and affecting the problem of our credibility is the appointment of our new Drug Czar. We are working on an action plan for the new Drug Czar to create a strong first impression.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM:

Although on the face of it criminal justice reform is not sexy, it does have great potential. The one anti-crime area we did not adequately address in the crime bill is criminal justice reform. Part of the reason is that the real problem exists at the state level. This whole area can be reduced to swift and certain punishment. The notion of the revolving door is truly a local and state problem.

At the Federal level, when someone is tried and convicted they serve their time and there is a certainty of a trial. That is not the case at the state level.

There are four parts to criminal justice reform:

1. Speedy Trial Act
2. Victims Bill of Rights
3. Juvenile Reform
4. Truth in Sentencing.

Each state is different. Some states are stronger in other areas and weaker in others and some are strong in all four. The Feds are strong on all four. The President could give a speech challenging the states to adopt national minimum standards in the above mentioned points. This speech could be delivered at a national ABA speech outlining the President's plan to shut the revolving door to hardened criminals. It also offers the opportunity to push the onus of responsibility back on the 31 Republican governors for not doing more to fight crime.

CONCLUSION:

After reading this, a Presidential meeting to outline the following year will help us see this agenda through.