AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

Mayor Willie W. Herenton. Yes, Mr. President.

The President. Vice Mayor Sharp of Knoxville?

Vice Mayor Jack Sharp. Yes, sir.

The President. Mayor Corradini of Salt Lake?

Mayor Deedee Corradini. I'm here.

The President. And Mayor Delaney of Jacksonville?

Mayor John A. Delaney. Right here, Mr. President.

The President. Mayor Greco of Tampa?

Mayor Dick A. Greco. Thank you, Mr. President. We all thank you here.

The President. Mayor Bosley of St. Louis?

Mayor Freeman R. Bosley, Jr. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. I'll see you tomorrow, won't I?

Mayor Bosley. Yes.

The President. The day after tomorrow.

Mayor Bosley. Right.

The President. Mayor James of Newark?

Mayor Sharpe James. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Mayor Finkbeiner of Toledo?

Mayor Carty Finkbeiner. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. And Mayor Lanier of Houston, is he on the phone?

Participant. He's stuck in city council. [*Laughter*]

The President. And Sheriff Glover of Jacksonville county, are you on the phone?

Sheriff Nathaniel Glover. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. And of course, Mayor Brown. I said hello to you earlier.

Mayor Brown. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. I thank all of you very much, and I know you will do a lot with these 43,000 additional officers to make the streets of America safer. Thank you very much.

Goodbye.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:57 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Willie Brown of San Francisco, CA, and Sheriff Nathaniel Glover of Duval County, FL.

Remarks at the National Peace Officers Memorial Service
May 15, 1996

Thank you very much, Gil Gallegos, for your introduction, your leadership, and your very moving remarks. Thank you, Karen Lippe, Senator Daschle, Senator Biden, Attorney General Reno, Secretary Rubin, General McCaffrey, distinguished leaders of law enforcement, and the supporters of law enforcement who are here. To all the family members who are here, and especially to the families who lost the life of someone you loved because that person was willing to risk his or her life to protect the rest of us, I say thank you from a grateful nation. Thank you for your strength, your courage, and your sacrifice. We are all forever in your debt.

I am proud to stand with you today to honor the memory and the lives of the more than 170 men and women who died for their country last year in the service of law enforcement, who died for law, for order, for justice, and for peace. They were American heroes.

When I joined you last year on this very difficult day, it was not even a month since the bombing in Oklahoma City revealed to all of us the evil of which some people are capable. Today, eight Federal law enforcement officers who lost their lives on that dark day join their brothers and sisters on the memorial wall.

As the shock waves from the bombing reverberated across our Nation, thousands of Americans dropped whatever they were doing and went to help. One of them was a deputy sheriff in Milledgeville, Georgia, named Will Robinson. He worked all day and all night cooking meals for emergency workers and volunteers, doing whatever he could to help. That's what he was all about. That's why he went into law enforcement, to help. That's why he was planning to dress up as Santa Claus and play with kids in prekindergarten last Christmas, just like he did the year before. He wanted the children to have some fun and to know that police officers are people you can count on.

But just before last Christmas, William Edward Robinson, 26 years old, 3 years a deputy sheriff, with a firm handshake and a big heart, responded to a 911 call and was gunned down doing his job, trying to stop an armed robber getting away with a few hundred dollars. Will's boss, Sheriff Bill Massee, called him "everybody's friend, the boy you wanted your daughter to go out with, the boy you wanted to be your son's best friend, the last person I ever wanted to see killed in the line of duty."

My friends, there are 14,064 names on the law enforcement memorial, every one like Deputy Sheriff Will Robinson, heroes who laid down their lives for their neighbors, people we must honor, living up to their example and carrying on their crusade.

I know the American people sometimes take what law enforcement officers do for granted. But the truth is, it is extraordinary. Somehow you find the strength to get up every day, put your badge on, and risk your life for the rest of us, an act all the more wondrous for its simple, silent courage.

Police risk everything, and what do we owe them for it? Well, when police are walking down the street, they ought to feel like every law-abiding citizen is walking with them. When they catch a violent criminal, they should feel confident they will be punished promptly and severely. When they enter danger, they should not have to worry that they will be easily outgunned. They should always know that the fight against crime is a national commitment.

That is what I have tried to bring to our country with the help of men and women in the Congress of both parties. We know the police need reinforcement; you have told us that. And America needs more police. That's why our crime bill puts another 100,000 police on the street over 5 years.

Just today, before I came over here, I spoke to mayors and police chiefs all across this country to award nearly 9,000 new police officers to over 2,500 communities, to bring our total to 43,000 new officers in just 20 months. We're going to meet that 100,000 commitment to you and the citizens you protect.

Thanks to the efforts of Members of Congress in both parties, we took 19 deadly assault weapons off the street and made the Brady bill the law of the land. And not a single, law-abiding sportsman or woman has lost a weapon. But 60,000 people have lost the chance to buy a weapon; 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers were prohibited from buying handguns because of the Brady bill. That makes law enforcement safer and more successful. The crime bill said to repeat violent offenders, "three strikes and you're out." If you murder law enforcement officers, the death penalty is waiting.

And thanks to you and those whom we honor today for their ultimate sacrifice and to citizens who have supported you, crime is coming down in America. Violent crimes have dropped for 3 years in a row. We know it is not enough. We know we must do more. As your president said, the antiterrorism bill will help. And again, I thank the Members of Congress in both parties who supported it.

We also know that citizens have to do more. Just last week I called for a citizen force of one million more volunteers to stand shoulder to shoulder with you. There are 20,000 neighborhood crime watch groups in America. If 50 more people joined each one of them, there would be a million more folks standing by those of you in uniform to prevent crime before it happens, to help catch criminals when it does, to make our streets safer, and make your work more successful. I hope the American people will join you in greater numbers than ever in the months and years ahead.

But we have some work to do up here as well. Today I challenge Congress to follow its admirable work in the crime bill, the Brady bill, the antiterrorism bill, in listening to the police officers across this country in passing a ban on cop-killer bullets. We don't need a commission to study it. We don't need research to tell us what kind of materials make these armor-piercing bullets. We need a simple test and a straightforward ban. If a bullet can go through a bulletproof vest like a hot knife through butter, it should be against the law.

These bullets are designed to kill law enforcement officers wearing bulletproof vests. This is not a complicated issue, my friends. It's a simple, straightforward issue of a commitment to the safety of our men and women in uniform.

The second thing we ought to do is to make sure that anyone in America who commits a truly violent crime serves the time. The Federal Government has eliminated parole. I renew the challenge I made to the States last January in the State of the Union: Guarantee that serious, violent criminals serve at least 85 percent of their sentence.

It is wrong to make our police officers risk their lives to apprehend dangerous criminals, then go to the trouble of trying them and seeing them convicted, and then have to see the same police officers face the same criminals on the street before they have received the full punishment the jury gave them. Police officers should not have to risk their lives and then stand like doormen at a revolving door of a penitentiary.

These are commonsense ideas, but they're more. They're the least we can do for the brave men and women of American law enforcement. So, again I say, as we have often in the last 3 years, let us put aside partisanship and close ranks and work together and get the job done.

My fellow Americans, we lost too many wonderful men and women in uniform last year. We lost more last year than in any year in 6 years. Nothing we can do will ease the sorrow or soften the blow for those of you who survive them. Only God and time and the love you have for each other can do that. But you must know how much the rest of us honor them and how much we honor you. Those who gave their lives in the oldest fight of all, for right over wrong, for peace over conflict, for the safety of their neighbors and their family and their friends, in their memory, we must move forward.

I know, as all of you do, that we will never eliminate crime completely. It is not within the power of any of us to totally transform human nature. But I do believe that we can make America a better and different and safer place.

And the test would be simple for me. I believe we would honor the sacrifice of those whom we honor today if we could create an America where every time you turned on the television news, you didn't see a report of a horrible crime leading the news, and when you did see one, you were shocked instead of numbed; you knew it was the exception, not the rule; you knew we had turned the tide and made this a basically peaceful, law-abiding, safe country for children to grow up in and go to school in and raise their own families in. That is the test by which we must measure our efforts to honor those who have served us with the last full measure of their devotion.

Until then, let me pledge to you that all of us who see you will remain humbled by your courage, know we are safer for your service, and will attempt to be faithful to the standard your sacrifice demands.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:43 p.m. on the Capitol steps. In his remarks, he referred to Gil Gallegos, president, Fraternal Order of Police, and Karen Lippe, president, Fraternal Order of Police Auxiliary.

Letter to Senator Bob Dole on the Announcement of His Retirement From the Senate

May 15, 1996

Dear Mr. Leader:

As I mentioned when we spoke by phone earlier today, you have served your country in so many ways, and you should be proud of your 35 years in Congress. On behalf of a grateful America, as you retire from the Senate, I thank you for your service.

During the fall campaign, you and I will engage in what I believe is one of the most important jobs in our democracy, as we lead a great national debate about how best to move our country into the future. I look forward to participating with you in that discussion.

Until then, I believe that the coming weeks and months can be a moment of genuine bipartisan achievement in meeting the challenges we all face together. Before you go, I look forward to working with you and Speaker Gingrich, and afterwards with your successor, to move ahead to give our people a balanced budget, welfare reform, an increase in the minimum wage and the Kassebaum-Kennedy health care reform.

As you know so well, it is when we work together that we can truly make progress for our country and for the people who sent us here.