

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Law Enforcement Officials

January 28, 2013

Well, Vice President Biden and I just want to thank the police chiefs and sheriffs who are here today representing law enforcement officials all across the country who obviously share our deep concern about issues of gun safety and how we can protect our communities and keep our kids safe.

A couple of weeks ago, I appeared along with Joe to present the administration's ideas in terms of steps that we have to take. And I issued a number of executive actions that can—could be taken unilaterally in order to improve our collection of data, to make sure that we're coordinating more effectively with State and local governments, and to do everything that we could to improve the issue of gun safety and to make our communities safer.

But as we've indicated before, the only way that we're going to be able to do everything that needs to be done is with the cooperation of Congress. And that means passing serious laws that restrict the access and availability of assault weapons and magazine clips that aren't necessary for hunters and sportsmen and those who—responsible gun owners who are out there. It means that we are serious about universal background checks. It means that we take seriously issues of mental health and school safety.

We recognize that this is an issue that elicits a lot of passion all across the country. And Joe and my Cabinet members who have been involved in this have been on a listening session over the last several months. No group is more important for us to listen to than our law enforcement officials. They are where the rubber hits the road.

And so I welcome this opportunity to work with them, to hear their views in terms of what will make the biggest difference to prevent something like Newtown or Oak Creek from happening again. But many of them also recognize that it's not only the high-profile mass shootings that are of concern here, it's also what happens on a day-in-day-out basis in places like Chicago or Philadelphia, where young people are victims of gun violence every single day. That's why part of the conversation that we're going to be having today relates not only to the issue of new laws or better enforcement of our gun laws, it also means what are we doing to make sure that we've got the strongest possible law enforcement teams on the ground? What are we doing to hire more cops? What are we doing to make sure that they're getting the training that they need? What are we doing to make sure our sheriff's offices in rural counties have access to some of the resources that some of the big cities do in order to deal with some of these emergencies?

So I'm looking forward to a robust conversation. I know that this is not a shy group, mainly because they're dealing with life-and-death situations every single day. But I'm very grateful to them for their participation. This is a representative group. It comes from a wide cross-section of communities across the country. And hopefully, if law enforcement officials who are dealing with this stuff every single day can come to some basic consensus in terms of steps that we need to take, Congress is going to be paying attention to them and we'll be able to make progress.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:28 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan; Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr.; Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano; and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Law enforcement officials, meeting with President.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Duncan, Arne; Holder, Eric H., Jr.; Napolitano, Janet A.; Sebelius, Kathleen.

Subjects: Congress : Bipartisanship; Connecticut : Shootings in Newtown; Education : School improvement and renovation; Education, Department of : Secretary; Health and Human Services, Department of : Secretary; Health and medical care : Mental health programs and services; Homeland Security, Department of : Secretary; Justice, Department of : Attorney General; Law enforcement and crime : Federal Assault Weapons Ban; Law enforcement and crime : Gun control; Law enforcement and crime : Gun violence, prevention efforts; Law enforcement and crime : State and community law enforcement agencies, Federal support; White House Office : Vice President; Wisconsin : Shootings in Oak Creek.

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