Remarks to the National Association of Police Organizations and an Exchange With Reporters

June 24, 1993

The President. First, let me welcome you here. And this is our replay from the time we got weathered out in March. And I'm glad you could all come back. I want to thank you for the work you do and for the support that you gave to me last year when I was attempting to become President and for the support you have given so many of our initiatives in the last 5 months.

I have been busily at work for the last several days working with the United States Senate in our attempt to pass our economic plan, which will reduce the national deficit by $500 billion and provide some significant incentives to turn this economy around, including keeping interest rates down, which is critical to our future. We've had a dramatic increase in the number of ordinary Americans, I imagine including some people in this room, who have, for example, refinanced their homes in the last 5 or 6 months, because we've got interest rates at a 20-year low, 130,000 new construction jobs in the economy, 755,000 jobs overall. It is critical that we pass this. And that's what we're primarily involved in today, as I'm sure you understand.

I also asked the Congress to adopt a modified bill for making a down payment on our investment package, which they did, which included, as I'm sure you know, some $200 million for communities to hire police officers. That is a down payment on the campaign commitment I made to empower our communities to hire another 100,000 police officers over the next 4 years, to go to more community policing, to provide for safer streets, and to support you in the work you're doing.

I also want to tell you that the Attorney General and I have been working hard for the last several weeks with interested Members of Congress to bring up a crime bill this year. Sadly, it did not pass last year, for all kinds of reasons. That crime bill is still to be finally defined, but I can assure you it will include the Brady bill; it will include a provision for boot camps as alternative punishment for first-time non-violent offenders; it will include a continuing effort to hire more police officers on our streets and to expand community policing. I welcome the ideas, the expertise, and the advice of all of you in putting this bill together and in push-
ing it through the Congress. It will be a high priority for the administration, and I expect it to begin soon.

We can't really revive the whole fabric of our economy until we put the society back together in the places where it's broken. One of the things that we're attempting to do in this economic bill is to finally test the proposition of whether the private sector can revitalize the most distressed areas of our big cities or our small towns and rural areas with an empowerment zone concept that would offer real big incentives for people to go into a lot of the meanest streets in this country and invest their money to put people to work, to start businesses, to try to make those places come alive again in positive ways.

We also, as all of you know, are committed to doing the things that we've been talking about. I think it's worth just closing with the thought that there are a lot of people in this country who are genuinely insecure today. That shooting at the swimming pool here in Washington, DC, that I'm sure all of you read about, is a horrible example of the kind of mindless behavior that is ripping at the fabric of society. And now I think of how many children are afraid to go back to the pool, a place where wholesome recreation will occur, a place where kids can stay out of trouble and in water in the summertime; how many of their parents might be afraid for them to go back.

That is the sort of thing that I hope we can keep in the minds of our policymakers as we deal with the crime bill and deal with these other issues. And I assure you that I welcome your input into all of them.

I think I'd like to close just by saying a special word of appreciation to the Justice Department and the FBI, to the United States Attorney, and to the New York City Police Department for the work that they have done in making the arrests that broke up a terrorist gang in New York. It was a very impressive piece of work and a real tribute to the local folks and to the cooperation that the Federal Government and the local people had. And I thank them for that, and thank you.

Now, the Attorney General and I are here. We're going to answer your questions. But first we're going to answer a few from the press.

Terrorism

Q. Mr. President, can I follow up—

Q. To follow up on that, do you support a Federal law for the death penalty for terrorists? And can you tell us how and exactly when you found out about this plot?

The President. First of all, I support the crime bill. I supported the crime bill last year which expanded the death penalty in many different areas. And as you know, I have a longstanding support for capital punishment.

But let me answer the specific thing. I was briefed about this operation at about the time it was occurring, a little before. I knew that they had been working on it. But all the credit for this goes to the FBI and the local people. They did the work. They've been working on this for some weeks now, and I don't think I should say more about it. The Justice Department will have more to say at an appropriate time.

Q. Can you say whether you believe that everyone has been arrested who was involved in this? And have you had any communication, do you plan to have any communication with President Mubarak or any of the other possible victims?

The President. I have not yet had any communications with any of the people that were on the list. I think any questions about the nature of the conspiracy and the group should be answered by the law enforcement officials, not by me.

Economic Program

Q. Mr. President, do you have the votes yet in the Senate for your budget to pass at this time, now?

The President. I certainly hope so.

Q. Well, I ask the question because your spokesman said earlier that you didn't have them but that you expected to by the end of the day. Do you have them now?

The President. Who did? Who said that earlier?

Q. Dee Dee said that—that you didn't have them this morning, but you expected to have them by the end of the day. Do you have them now?

The President. Senator Mitchell is my ultimate authority on that. We're working our way through these amendments now, and we just had, as I understand it, Senators Harkin, Metzenbaum, and Wellstone just announced their support for the package, pursuant to an agreement to reduce the size of the Medicaid
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cuts. There are still about $10 billion Medicaid
cuts over and above what the House put in,
which was about $50 billion.

So that will help, and that puts us three votes
closer. And I just don’t—I can’t say for sure.
We’re going to have a whole series of amend-
ments which go through today. And then at
the end of the day we may find ourselves in
a position where some Members want some
things which can only come out of the con-
ference, and they may have to just decide
whether to let the bill go to conference or not.
The House Members had to make the same
sort of decision. But I’m hopeful. That’s all I
can tell you. I’m hopeful. We’re working hard,
and I’m hopeful.

Q. Does that bring it under $500 billion, sir?
The President. No. Not to my knowledge. The
last time I saw it, it didn’t, Andrea [Andrea
Mitchell, NBC News]. Now, I haven’t seen the
exact details of the last—the last time I heard
about it, about an hour and a half ago, it did
not.

Q. What kind of momentum do you want
from this vote, and do you see this as a real
turning point for your Presidency?
The President. There have been a lot of those
lately. ![Laughter] The vote in the House was,
and this will be. We have to go on to con-
ference. If it passes today, this will be a very
loud statement. It will say that both Houses
of the Congress are committed to the largest
deficit reduction program in history, to putting
the taxes and the spending cuts in a trust fund,
to spending cuts equal to and now greater than
the tax increases, and to an extremely progres-
sive program where those who can, best able
to pay, are asked to pay. The Senate Finance
Committee bill, according to the Congressional
Budget Office, distributes 78 percent of the bur-
den to people with incomes above $200,000
whose taxes were lowered in the 1980’s while
their incomes went up.

So I think that this is a very, you know, it’s
a very important vote, and I hope we can pre-
vail. But I never count my chickens before
they’re hatched.

Thank you.

Q. Are you counting any Republicans? Any
Republicans, Hatfield or Jeffords?
The President. I’ve asked; that’s all I know.

Q. Did you ask in phone calls?

Q. Mr. President, is the final arrangement
on gays in the military going to require them
to stay in the closet, sir?
The President. Bye, everybody; no more ques-
tions. I have to answer their questions.
Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:43 p.m. in the
Indian Treaty Room of the Old Executive Office
Building.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With the University of
Arkansas Rollin’ Razorbacks Wheelchair Athletes
June 24, 1993

Economic Program

Q. Mr. President, in retrospect, do you wish
you had reached out more to Republicans early
on? Some moderates say they’d be on board
if you had.

The President. I don’t know. I did call a num-
ber of them. And I tried to—after Senator
Boren and Senator Danforth announced their
little coalition—I don’t mean little, I mean their
coalition—I also reached out to some Repub-
licans then. And I continue to reach out to
some Republicans in the House. It’s just rare
in these first tough budget votes to get any
votes from the other party. And I hope that