

June 24 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1994

And I'm going to keep working with them. I think there's lots of different ways to do it, and I think we'll find a way to do it. I'm very, very hopeful now. And I think Mr. Gephardt's hopeful now.

[Representative Gephardt stated that Congress was making progress on health care reform.]

Q. Mr. President, on behalf of everyone listening to KMOX, thank you very much for joining us this morning.

The President. Thank you. Goodbye.

NOTE: The telephone interview began at 11:07 a.m. The President spoke from Air Force One en route to St. Louis. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Jerry Falwell and Rush Limbaugh, conservative radio and television commentators.

Exchange With Reporters on Anticrime Legislation in St. Louis

June 24, 1994

Q. Speaking of the crime bill, Mr. President, do you know where it stands right now? Can you give us a state of play?

The President. Well, I met earlier this week with Senator Biden and Chairman Brooks, and we talked about it. We think that the essential elements are intact. We believe that it will come out with 100,000 police, with "three strikes and you're out," with prevention programs, with summer jobs for the kids and midnight basketball, the after-school programs, with the assault weapons ban. And they're still working on some of the other issues. I expect that the conference committee will come out with it reasonably soon, and I think it will go through both Houses.

Q. One of the hangups, sir, is racial justice. Have you decided where you come down on that position yet?

The President. Wait and see what the conference committee does. They asked me to give

them a few more days to work on it, and we're going to see what they—

Q. Would it help if you came out with—

The President. —know what's going on—the main thing we don't want to do is to change the subject. The subject is how to get the crime rate down, how to get the police out, how to get the assault weapons—the police on the street, the assault weapons ban into law, how to get the prevention funds out here, how to get the "three strikes and you're out" law out. And I think that they're working on it. I believe everybody in the Congress is going to work on it in good faith, and I think we'll have a—*[inaudible]*.

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:50 p.m. during a tour of the Fox Park neighborhood. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks to Summer of Safety Program Participants in St. Louis

June 24, 1994

Thank you very much. Thank you so much, ladies and gentlemen. It's an honor for me to be back in St. Louis and to be with all these fine people who have already spoken. Your mayor was on a roll today, wasn't he? *[Applause]* You gave a great speech. Thank you, Mayor. I want to thank the Lieutenant Governor, the other State officials who are here, the legislators, the aldermen. I'd like to say a special word

of thanks to your Congressman, Bill Clay, for his outstanding leadership in the Congress and on this issue of national service. And I want to say a special word of thanks to Dick Gephardt, the majority leader of the House. Without him, we would not have been able to turn this economy around, to break the gridlock in Washington, to get this country moving again. His leadership has been extraordinary. I want to

thank Chief Harmon for the enlightened leadership he's providing to this city and to this police department and to all the officers, the men and women who work with him to try to make this a safer city. And I want to say a special word of thanks to Tim Hager. Didn't he do a good job introducing me? [Applause] You know, Martin Luther King once said that everyone can be great because everyone can serve. This young man had a dream to be a United States marine. He fulfilled it. He proved he could make it through basic training. And then he had to leave. But he came home and joined this program. And I think he captured the essence of his service when he said it.

Let me tell you something, folks, all of us breathed a sigh of relief and had a genuine hope when I was able to announce that the North Koreans had agreed to suspend their nuclear program and talk to us about taking a different course into the future. And that was a wonderful thing. But when thousands of people are murdered on our streets every year, when thousands of our children are robbed of their future, a big part of our national security is what happens right here in St. Louis and on the streets of every community of this country. And Tim is helping to protect this Nation's security by participating in this program.

I'm glad to be here in Fox Park. Congressman Clay said he used to play softball here, and he claims he was really good. Does anybody remember? [Laughter]

I want you to also know that I hope this day will live in the history of this community as the beginning of a real awareness by everyone in the community that perhaps the most important thing we can do as Americans is to join together at the grassroots and take action to get control of our lives, our communities, and our destinies again. As Eli Segal said, there will be over 7,000 young Americans working in this Summer of Safety program here and at 70 other sites all around our country, reminding us that we can do more than complain about what's wrong; we can actually get together and take action to do something right, to make our people safer and our future more secure.

In a funny way, the national service program, which is the least bureaucratic, least nationally directed program I have been associated with, may have the most lasting legacy of anything I am able to do as your President, because it has the chance to embody all the things I ran

for President to do, to get our country moving again, to make Government work for ordinary people again, and to empower individuals and communities to take control of their own destiny.

We are, after all, a nation of citizens. Our political system, just for example, limits the President to two terms. Our destiny is not dependent upon the actions or the success of any one individual. But it is dependent upon the shared values, the shared commitment, the shared determination, and the shared willingness of a majority of the people of this country and a majority of the people in every community in this country to seize our own destiny.

These young people in the national service program—there are 7,000 this summer; there will be 20,000 in the fall; year after next there will be 100,000 of them. And those who work all year long will be working to solve the problems of America at the grassroots and earning a little credit for themselves toward education, in a job-training program or in a college. We're going to help them become better and more successful Americans because they're going to help us to be better Americans as well where we live.

You know, at the very height of the Peace Corps, which did so much to capture the imagination of my generation 30 years ago, the most who ever served were 16,000 in one year. We'll have 20,000 this fall, 100,000 year after next, and I hope I live to see a permanent program with at least a quarter of a million young Americans every year, working to move this country in the right direction.

This all sounds pretty high-flown, but let me tell you, it's really personal. And we started with the Summer of Safety because there is nothing more important than order and peace in a free society. It's a really personal thing. I'll bet you if I ask you to raise your hands, every one of you just about knows someone in your family who's been victimized by some kind of crime in the last 10 or 15 years, maybe in the last 10 or 15 months.

Some of you here may remember Samuel Smith, who used to live in this neighborhood. Last Thursday he was found dead, killed in an attack that may have been drug-related. He was 12 years old, the 23d child killed in St. Louis so far this year. You probably know about Joseph Gray, who stopped to use the phone outside the market at Shenandoah and California in Fox

Park 2 months ago. He was robbed and gunned down with an AK-47. He was 19 years old.

We all know that this problem is out of hand. We know that this is the greatest country in the world with the strongest economy in the world. But we already have more people in jail as a percentage of our population than any country in the world, because we, you and I, have permitted the crime problem to get out of hand. And only we can turn it around. And we must do it.

The Congress has been working—when I came here 2 years ago on my bus trip, after listening to the American people talk about their problems and their hopes, I said we ought to pass the Brady bill and require background checks before we sold guns to people with criminal records. Well, after 7 years of gridlock, the Brady bill is now the Brady law.

I also said that we ought to cut the Federal bureaucracy and make it smaller and use the savings to put more police officers on our streets, to ban assault weapons, to have tougher punishment for repeat offenders, but to provide boot camps and drug education and midnight basketball and summer jobs and things for young people to say yes to, so that we could save them, as many as we could possibly save, from a life of crime and violence and disappointment. And now those ideas and commitments are in a crime bill the Congress is debating. They've been working on it since I became President.

But the time is now to act. People don't have to live in fear. Young people shouldn't have to feel pulled into a life of crime. Gangs shouldn't be better armed than police. Don't let anybody fool you, the crime bill that's about to pass the Congress is the most important effort ever made by the United States Government to help people in their communities fight crime. It means more police on the streets and taking guns and kids off the streets. It means more jail cells for people behind bars and more jobs for kids to avoid getting behind bars. It will ban assault weapons like the AK-47 that killed Joseph Gray. It will give serious repeat offenders what they have earned: "three strikes" and no eligibility for parole, "you're out." It will address the terrible, terrible problem of youth violence. It will be illegal for teenagers to possess handguns. It will be possible for every community in this country to set up drug courts to turn around cases of drug offenders by giving them

a chance to do something besides go to jail if they'll take treatment and work in a community. It will provide more help for safe schools, more security, more law enforcement. It will help to reinforce the efforts we're making in public housing projects all around this country to end the cycle of violence preying on our children. This bill will give our young people something to say yes to: midnight basketball, after-school programs, summer job programs, and it will mean more police officers on the street.

You know, the violent crime rate is 7 times higher now in 1994 than it was 30 years ago. But 30 years ago, we had 500,000 police officers, and today we only have 550,000. Our bill will put another 100,000 on the street to walk the streets, to ride the bikes, to know the neighbors, to make contact with the children, to prevent crime as well as to catch criminals.

This bill is paid for not by a tax increase but by a disciplined determination to reduce the size of the Federal work force by 250,000 over a 5-year period. At the end of this 5-year period, we'll have the smallest Federal Government we've had since John Kennedy was the President of the United States. We'll have 3 years of deficit reduction for the first time since Harry Truman of Missouri was President of the United States. We will cut and totally eliminate over 100 Government programs, cut hundreds of others. But we'll spend more on education, on training, on new technology, and new jobs for the 21st century. And yes, we will spend much, much more for the fight against crime and the fight for our children's future.

This crime bill has been stalled in Congress for 5 years. But the House has passed a crime bill; the Senate has passed a crime bill. There are some differences between them, and they're trying to work it out. What I want to say to you, my friends, is if you believe in the Summer of Safety, if you believe in the actions that Chief Harmon and Mayor Bosley are taking here, tell the Congress that you support the efforts we are all making to pass this bill.

We don't need to wait anymore; 5 years is too long. Too many children are dead; too many futures are gone; too many neighborhoods have been divided. Now we know what to do. Let's get out here and help the volunteers by having the National Government do its part to be partners in the fight against crime.

Let me just make one final point. In order to be in the Summer of Service, in order to wear these T-shirts, in order to put a police uniform on every day, you have to believe that you can make a difference. In order to work with these children in these T-shirts here, you have to believe that you can make a difference. One of the biggest problems we've got in this country today is that we are constantly being told that we can't make a difference, that everybody that's trying is a sucker, that everybody in power is trying to take advantage of you, that nothing good can ever happen. It emanates over and over and over again from every news outlet we have.

If you talk about hope, you're derided as being naive. If you're really good at bad-mouthing people, you can get a radio talk show. [Laughter] Now, I want to tell you something: It may be fun to listen to, but it's tough to live by. It's tough to live by. Tim is going to make more difference than all of the bad things that'll ever be said on the radio talk shows in his life.

These people in these uniforms deserve to have somebody believe in them and stick up for them and stand by them. And these children deserve to have adults who believe in their future and are prepared to fight for it. I'm telling you, we can do this.

The biggest honor I have had, I think, as your President, is the honor of going to rep-

resent the entire American people at the 50th anniversary of D-Day and the end of World War II by the most important military action in the 20th century. When I looked at the graves, the thousands of graves of all those people who died for our security when they were so young to save the world and save freedom, I thought to myself, there wasn't a single cynic among them. You couldn't be cynical and make that kind of sacrifice. And all those who lived, who came home, who were fortunate enough to survive, they weren't cynical that day, either, that they put their lives on the line for our freedom. If you look around these streets and you think about the kids that have died, the people that have been on drugs, the old folks that have been terrorized, that is not what those people died for. We did not get to be the oldest and most successful democracy in human history by being cynics and by badmouthing. We got here by being believers and by doing. That is what we celebrate today.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:33 p.m. in Fox Park. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Freeman Bosley of St. Louis; Lt. Gov. Roger Wilson of Missouri; Clarence Harmon, St. Louis police chief; and Tim Hager, Summer of Safety worker. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Statement on the Death of Airmen at Fairchild Air Force Base *June 24, 1994*

I was profoundly saddened to learn tonight of the tragic aircraft accident at Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington, that took the lives of four Air Force officers of the 12th Air Combat Command. The deaths of these superb airmen remind us as a nation of the hazardous risks involved in maintaining the readiness and pro-

iciency of our Armed Forces and the debt we owe our military personnel. Hillary joins me in asking all Americans to keep the families of these distinguished Air Force officers and all the personnel of the 12th Air Combat Command in their prayers.