Statement on the Observance of International Literacy Day
August 24, 1994

On International Literacy Day, I am delighted to salute the many men and women who work so diligently to empower all people with the invaluable ability to read.

If our world is to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, we must harness the energy and creativity of all our citizens. Nearly half of American adults lack many of the basic literacy skills so essential to success in today's complex and ever-changing world. Literacy is not a luxury; it is a right and a responsibility. And in an international community increasingly dedicated to the principles of equality and opportunity, illiteracy is unacceptable.

It takes great courage and hard work to overcome illiteracy. But with the help of dedicated teachers, tutors, and volunteers, everyone can learn the joys of reading and writing. These caring partnerships are the essence of community service, bringing hope and inspiration to all of us.

As people around the world celebrate International Literacy Day, I stand with you in working toward the goal of universal literacy. I am proud to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the countless individuals whose tireless efforts are helping to put this dream within our grasp.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: International Literacy Day was observed on September 8, 1994. An original was not available for verification of the content of this statement.

Remarks on Anticrime Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters
August 25, 1994

The President. Good afternoon. For 6 long years, the American people have watched and waited as Washington talked about stemming the tide of crime and violence in this country but did not act. Today Senators of both parties took a brave and promising step to bring the long, hard wait for a crime bill closer to an end.

I want to salute the Senators of both Republican and Democratic ranks who put law and order, safety and security above politics and party.

Ordinary Americans all across our country ought to take heart today. In the last 2 weeks, Members of Congress in both Houses and from both parties have thrown off the bonds of politics-as-usual to do the people's business. That's what the people sent us all here to do. I hope this crime bill will now rapidly pass the Senate and that we can move on doing the people's business across party lines, unencumbered by
the labels of the past and the false choices of
the past, moving to a better future for all Ameri-
cans.

Thank you.

Cuba

Q. Mr. President, Fidel Castro says there’s
a simple way to stop the exodus of Cuban refu-
gees, and that is to open up a high-level dialog
between Washington and Havana. What’s so bad
about that?

The President. Well, I think, first of all, we
have asked that we resume our talks, as you
know, or we have offered a resumption of talks
on the whole issue of immigration. And I have
been doing a careful study over the last few
days of the nature of our immigration laws and
their implementation, especially since the 1984
agreement signed in the Reagan administration.
But that is what this issue is about.

The other issues—I think President Castro
or Premier Castro needs to be in consultation
with his own folks. The people of Cuba want
democracy and free markets. And that’s always
been our policy, and that will continue to be
our policy. But I would urge the American peo-
ples to be firm and be calm about what is going
on here now. We must not let any nation, even
a nation as close to us as Cuba, even with so
many American citizens of Cuban descent, con-
trol the immigration policy of the United States
and violate the borders of the United States.
We have to be firm in this. And we will work
this through to a successful conclusion, I believe.

Q. Mr. President, what’s wrong with talking
to Cuba and Fidel Castro when we talk with
other so-called outlaw nations like North Korea?

The President. Well, we have a different pol-
cy of 30 years standing. And I think Mr. Castro
knows the conditions for changing that policy.
The discussions that have been held on a regular
basis for several years now between our two
countries have been limited to matters of immi-
gration. They can be held, and we would sup-
port that.

Health Care Reform

Q. Mr. President, is health care dead this
year?

The President. I wouldn’t say that, no. I don’t
think you can say that because—and I don’t
think the recess will kill it—was that what you
were going to—and the reason I say that is
because, like most of you, I have watched with
great interest what has happened and what has
not happened in the Senate and the House.
I told you all when we started this issue a long
time ago, now over a year ago, that it was a
very complicated issue, that it’s no accident that
Presidents of both parties for 60 years have tried
to find a way to solve the health care crisis
and have never been able to do it, particularly
in the face of intense, organized, and expensive
efforts to stop it.

But I think the less I say I say the better right
now, as long as Senator Mitchell and Senator
Chafee and Senator Breaux and others are doing
their best to continue this dialog. I spoke to
another Democratic Senator today who said that
she felt there’s still a good chance that a bill
could come out that people would want to vote
for and think was the right thing to do. So
I think we just have to let this thing develop
a little bit and see what happens in these dia-
logs. And again, I think the less I say about
it, the better.

Thank you very much.

President’s Vacation

Q. When do you go on vacation?

The President. It’s still up to the Congress,
isn’t it?

Q. Will you wait until the Senate goes into
recess?

The President. Oh, absolutely. I want to wait
until the crime bill is over for sure.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:36 p.m. in the
Rose Garden at the White House.