

Statement on Signing Legislation on Witness Retaliation, Witness Tampering, and Jury Tampering *October 1, 1996*

Today I am pleased to sign H.R. 3120, legislation to protect the integrity of our legal system and ensure the safety of our families.

The United States is a nation of laws. We have always been committed to making our legal system the best, the most effective, and the fairest in the world.

In the last 3½ years, we have worked hard to live up to that fundamental obligation—putting more police on the street; getting gangs and guns and drugs off the street; introducing tougher penalties for a wide range of crimes; appointing more judges with the American Bar Association's top rating than any administration in 20 years.

Today we take an important new step. This legislation dramatically increases the punishment for those who would influence, tamper with, or retaliate against witnesses, jurors, and court officers in Federal criminal cases.

Let me be very clear: The integrity of our legal system depends on the integrity of our courts. And the integrity of our courts depends on individual citizens serving as impartial jurors—free from intimidation or temptation. We must see to it that juries decide cases based only on evidence presented in the courtroom. Our prosecutors must have a fair chance to make their case. Our fight against crime is too important, our system of justice too sacred, the security of our people too vital, for justice to be denied because a jury has been tampered with.

With this legislation, we send a simple message to those who would abuse our system of justice: When the integrity of our laws and the safety our people are at stake, we will take no chances.

NOTE: H.R. 3120, approved October 1, was assigned Public Law No. 104-214.

Statement on Signing the Carjacking Correction Act of 1996 *October 1, 1996*

Today I am proud to sign the Carjacking Correction Act of 1996. This legislation will increase the security of all Americans—particularly women.

Carjacking is a terrible crime. It is punishable under Federal law. In cases where carjackers have inflicted “serious bodily injury” on their victims, this tough law gets even tougher—the maximum sentence may be increased from 15 to 25 years.

Unfortunately, in a May 21, 1996, decision, in the case of *United States v. Rivera*, a panel on the First Circuit Court of Appeals held that a rape that took place during a carjacking did not constitute a “serious bodily injury.”

That's plain wrong, and the legislation I am signing today will prevent this mistake from ever happening again. This legislation says clearly: Sexual assault causes serious bodily injury.

Carjackers who rape their victims will meet with nothing less than the full force of the law.

This legislation builds on the work we have already done to make America safer for women. For too long, the threat of violence to women was not taken seriously enough. As American women were forced to look over their shoulders, society looked the other way.

So we took action. We passed the Violence Against Women Act, established a national registry of sex offenders, created a national 24-hour domestic violence hotline, and made “three strikes and you're out” the law of the land. We passed Megan's Law—and now States must tell communities whether a dangerous sexual predator is in their midst. We gave America the Brady bill—keeping guns out of the hands of 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers.

Last week I signed into law a strong, new Federal law to stop stalkers. Yesterday I signed