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Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Announcing the COPS Distressed Neighborhoods Pilot Project
May 29, 1998

Thank you very much, Commissioner, and congratulations on your new position as the superintendent of the Chicago police. Mayor White, thank you, as always, for your astounding leadership. Madam Attorney General, thank you for faithfully and vigorously pursuing the partnership with law enforcement we did talk about so long ago now. Mr. Vice President, thank you for all you have done to make this a safer country. And I'd like to thank all the mayors, the police officers who are here, and say a special word of welcome to Congressman Cummings for his presence and for his support.

Death of Barry M. Goldwater

Let me say, just before I came out here I received word that a few moments ago Senator Barry Goldwater passed away at the age of 89. He was truly an American original; I never knew anybody quite like him. As all of you know, we were of different parties and often different philosophies. But in the last several years, he was uncommonly kind to me and to Hillary. And I had occasions to visit with him, and I always came away, every time I met him—from the first time back when I was a senior in college, until the last time just a couple of years ago—with the impression that he was a great patriot and a truly fine human being. So our prayers will be with his wife and his family today. And our gratitude for his life of service to our country is very, very strong.

COPS Distressed Neighborhoods Pilot Project

As you have heard, our country has made a lot of progress in the fight against crime in the last few years. We've made a lot of progress on a lot of areas. We just announced that we would have a budget surplus this year for the first time since 1969. We have the lowest unemployment rate since 1970, the lowest inflation rate in over 30 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 27 years, and of course, the lowest crime rates in a quarter century.

All of these things are a great tribute to the American people in their communities, working at their lives. When I took office, I determined to make the Federal Government a genuine partner in building a better future for the American people everywhere. And it seemed to me that we could never do that unless we had a sensible strategy to make people feel safer in their streets. It is very difficult to feel like you're living in a free country as a free citizen if you don't feel safe walking the streets, if you don't think your children are safe when they're walking the streets or in the park or going to school, if you don't even feel safe in your own home.

So we have worked on the strategy that has been outlined by the previous speakers. I'd like to emphasize especially the work that was done to give law enforcement officers the tools to do the job, the community policing program to put 100,000 more police on the street, and the effort to enlist ordinary citizens in the work of helping police to prevent crime and to solve crimes and to give them the tools to do the job.

Now, this all shows that whether it's the crime, the budget deficit, welfare reform, homeownership, anything—any challenge this country faces, we can only solve it if we work together. But when we do work together, we invariably make progress, sometimes astonishing progress. The principle behind community policing in a way is the principle behind everything we tried to do domestically. It embodies the concept of working together, to get more police out of the station houses, out from behind the desks, onto the streets, working with people in the ways that Superintendent Hillard just outlined.

We pledged to put 100,000 on the street in the campaign of '92 and then in 1993 in the

budget. Finally, in the crime bill in '94, we succeeded in getting that commitment enacted into law. We knew it would be a long-term effort, and we said we would try to achieve it in 6 years. Now we have reached a milestone: In only 4 years, we have now funded 75,000 of that 100,000 community police. We're ahead of schedule on the thing that is doing the most to make America a safer place, thanks to those of you in law enforcement.

I might also say thanks to the Attorney General and to you, Chief. We're not only ahead of schedule; we're also under budget. So if you guys will keep us under budget, we may go over 100,000 police.

But as the Attorney General has said, and as all of you know, there are still some neighborhoods in America, and too many of them, where crime hasn't receded far enough or fast enough. Congressman Cummings told me this morning that he lives in one of those neighborhoods, and we need to do more. We have to focus our resources on high-crime, high-need neighborhoods to bring the benefits of community policing to every community. And in the difficult areas, that means we have to reach a critical mass of police officers in community policing before it can make the necessary difference.

So I am pleased to say today that the Department of Justice will fully fund over 700 new community police officers who will be on the beat specifically in troubled areas: 150 in Chicago fighting drug-related crime; 100 in Baltimore to fight drugs and violent crimes; 170 in Miami to take back the streets in neighborhoods along the Miami River; Hartford will put their officers to work to fight a new surge of violent gang activity.

Now, as we extend the reach of community policing in our cities, we in Washington have a responsibility to continue to advance this strategy that has brought success. We have more to do to protect our children, more to do to fight juvenile crime, more to do to keep our kids and our schools free and safe from guns and from drugs. The same community policing techniques that are helping to make our streets safe again are the best way to help keep our schools safe. In March we began to make funds available to achieve this objective, and we should do more.

We have to do more and more to push back the frontiers of violence. The recent wave of shootings in our schools reminds us again that more police, more prosecutors, tougher laws, more vigilant neighborhoods, and more positive opportunities for our kids to stay out of trouble in the first place. All of those things have to be done by those of us in authority.

But the parents, the teachers, the community leaders, all of them have to do more, too, to teach our children right from wrong, to teach them to turn away from violence, to identify troubled children before they do something irrevocably destructive. We have to do more to show our children by the power of example and the power of outreach that we care about each and every one of them.

Finally, let me say that I want to say what has been said by others—what the Attorney General said. You're doing a good job, and the rest of us are grateful. We can say, "Well, crime has dropped 27 percent," or "It's the lowest in 25 years." Those are statistical abstractions. There are children who are playing free today because of what you have done. There are people who are alive today because of what you have done. There are businesses functioning in neighborhoods today that would be closed if it hadn't been for what you have done. You have given our people a deeper freedom. And as we stand on the brink of a new century, we should all be very, very grateful.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:17 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Terry Hillard, superintendent of police, Chicago, IL; and Mayor Michael White of Cleveland, OH. The related proclamation on the death of Barry M. Goldwater is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.