

## Interview With Charles Gibson and Diane Sawyer and a Discussion With Students on ABC's "Good Morning America"

June 4, 1999

### *Situation in the Balkans*

*Mr. Gibson.* We are here to talk about a subject which really is on everybody's mind and has been the topic of conversation ever since the Littleton shootings at Columbine High. But I can't ignore the fact, obviously, that there were events yesterday involving perhaps peace in Yugoslavia and Serbia with the Serbs. Does your gut tell you we have peace?

*The President.* Well, I'm encouraged. I think that, first of all, President Ahtisaari of Finland and Mr. Chernomyrdin did a very good job. They got our positions very close together and then presented it to Mr. Milosevic, and they have accepted it.

But over the last 6½ years, I've had a number of agreements with Mr. Milosevic, and the only one that has been kept is the Dayton agreement where we had forces on the ground. So I will feel much better about this when we have evidence that there is a real withdrawal of Serb forces and when we're moving in.

*Mr. Gibson.* But the word is that they've accepted the terms that we sent in, so why keep bombing them in the interim? When a bully cries "uncle," you let him up, let him go home. You don't keep hitting on him.

*The President.* Well, you have been reporting about the nature of the continuing campaign. I think it's important that we continue the military action against the military targets until we have some evidence that there are more than words here. For 6½ years, we've had various agreements, but until we had the agreement ending the war in Bosnia at Dayton, the others weren't kept. And so I think that—and we've had the same problem in Kosovo. We want to know that the military forces are withdrawing, and we want to have the timetable for our people going in.

*Mr. Gibson.* So what is the evidence that would bring about a pause in the bombing? Is it the beginning of the withdrawal of the troops, once you see X number out?

*The President.* We want to see—we want to have a militarily verifiable withdrawal of the troops and an agreement about the introduction of the international force. That should come—

or could come quite soon. The paper that Mr. Ahtisaari gave to the Serbs provided for military-to-military contacts. Those contacts are to occur very soon, in the next several hours, probably early tomorrow, their time. And then we could proceed pretty quickly.

So, believe me, I'm anxious to end the bombing, but I want to know that our objectives have been achieved.

### *War Crimes*

*Mr. Gibson.* A couple of very quick questions. Were war crimes—the war crimes against Mr. Milosevic discussed at all in the talks?

*The President.* I don't believe they were.

*Mr. Gibson.* His staying in office, were they discussed—was that discussed?

*The President.* That's not part of the terms that NATO set out in the beginning.

*Mr. Gibson.* So that question is simply left—

*The President.* That question is left open. Now, he is subject to the jurisdiction of the International War Crimes Tribunal, which means that if he comes within the jurisdiction of any country that is cooperating with the United Nations, they would have an obligation to turn him over. But that was not a part of the terms necessary to secure return of the Kosovars and, therefore, we have to proceed with the conditions we set out—

*Mr. Gibson.* And very quickly, will the troops, the peacekeeping forces, once they go in, be under unified command?

*The President.* Yes. They have to be. We have to have an organized, unified way of dealing with this, because their lives will be at stake, too.

### *Gun Control Legislation*

*Mr. Gibson.* All right. Let me turn to the situation of kids and guns. The House, in the next few weeks, is going to start debating a bill that includes some gun control measures that were passed by the Senate. And political points will be scored by both sides in that debate.

But you and I know, don't we, really, that it's not going to make a damn bit of difference—only on the margins—in the way kids get guns.

*The President.* Well, first of all, I don't necessarily agree with that. I think the Brady bill has made a real difference; having the background checks matters. We know that 250,000 people, from the time I signed the Brady bill in '94 until last year, were unable to get handguns. We know just since the insta-check went in last year, another 36,000 people have been denied the right to get handguns. So closing the gun show loophole matters. Doing a background check for some other things I recommended, a background check for explosives as well—very important in the Littleton case—these things will matter.

Now, does more need to be done? I think so. I think that more does need to be done. The Speaker of the House agreed that we ought to make it unlawful for people under 21 to have handguns, and I was encouraged by that. And that's, of course, something I'm supporting.

*Mr. Gibson.* But even with the checks, what you can't get in the front door, so many people go around and get in the back door. Forty percent of the gun sales in this country are unregulated; nobody checks them. There are a group of kids that you're going to meet in the next half hour who are going to tell you, "If I want to get a gun, I can go get one, and nobody's going to know about it, and I'll have it within a week."

*The President.* That's true, but the more we move to make such transactions and possession unlawful and the more we move against people who perpetrate them, the more success we will have.

You know, it's funny, even the NRA says, "Well, we ought to prosecute crimes." Well, we ought to make the right things crimes, and we ought to make it unlawful for children to possess these weapons. We ought to make it unlawful for people to sell them to them or to transfer to them, and we ought to close the loopholes in the law. And as we do that, we will make a difference.

Also, keep in mind that the Littleton example is not the only example that we have to be mindful of. There are 13 children a day who are shot in America, who lose their lives, in ones and twos on the streets.

*Mr. Gibson.* There's a Littleton every day.

*The President.* So we have to make—anything we can do to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and kids, we ought to do.

*Mr. Gibson.* But when you went to Littleton, a friend of yours who supports you on gun control said to me in the last 48 hours, "The President"—because, as he said, Littleton has seared the national conscience—"the President had a chance to roar on gun control, and he meowed." And that was a friend of yours. There are very basic measures that could be taken that people agree on. We register every automobile in America—

*The President.* Absolutely.

*Mr. Gibson.* —we don't register guns. That's a step that would make a difference.

*The President.* Look, let's join the real world here. You want to have an honest conversation? Let's have an honest conversation. I am the first President who ever took on the NRA. I got my party in Congress to stand with me on the Brady bill, which has made a difference, on the assault weapons ban. We are now in the process of closing loopholes in the assault weapons ban.

What happened to them when they did that? In 1994 we lost between 12 and 20 members of the House of Representatives because they were targeted by the NRA for standing up for the lives of our children.

Now, wait a minute—you talk about roaring and meowing—then I came forward with this legislation. Did this roar through the Senate? No. We passed a bill closing the gun show loophole by 51–50 because of the Vice President of the United States. Did the House of Representatives make a priority out of what was passed in the Senate and pass it right through? No. They went home before taking action. Why? To give the NRA time to lobby them, to water down what was passed.

Now, I have made it perfectly clear that I want to get what was passed in the Senate passed in the House. Then we will come back and try to pass some more things, because Littleton did sear the conscience of the Nation. The question is not whether we have seared the conscience of the Nation; the question is whether, on gun issues, whether the people who now constitute the House and the Senate will pass what is sensible.

And I intend to do that. But for you to say that I shouldn't take what I can get because—and instead I should ask for things that I am

absolutely positive will be defeated in the Congress, is quite wrong. And to ignore the fact—and whoever you talked about that you don't want to out here—to ignore the fact that my administration and my party took on this issue when no one else would and paid a huge price for it and lost control of the House of Representatives in all probability because of it, and to pretend that this is an easy thing now because Littleton happened, is wrong. We are working very hard to pass sensible measures that will make a difference, that will save children's lives.

You say they won't save all lives. You say there are stronger measures that could be taken. You are absolutely right. You have no evidence that they could pass in this Congress.

Now, I will do my best to advocate more, but I am doing it—and I've made it clear—I want to do this in sequence. I want to pass what we've passed in the Senate in the House. Then I want us to come back with a second set of recommendations. I intend to keep working on this. I think this is going to take years. We have—the Congress is out of touch with the American people.

*Mr. Gibson.* But let me come back to you on that. The polls—I believe—really, the polls have shown that this country would accept registration of firearms. And yet we don't do that, and we're not fighting about regulation of guns.

*The President.* That's because—

*Mr. Gibson.* You regulate every other consumer product in America.

*The President.* But you want to have a candid conversation. The reason is, this Congress came to power after the 1994 elections because in critical races the people who voted for more modest things, like the Brady bill, which the polls showed the voters support, got beat. They got beat, Charlie.

*Mr. Gibson.* But hasn't the NRA won the debate at that point? Once we say—

*The President.* No.

*Mr. Gibson.* —it's politically impossible—

*The President.* No.

*Mr. Gibson.* —we can't do it—

*The President.* I didn't say it was—

*Mr. Gibson.* —we won't propose it, hasn't the NRA—

*The President.* No.

*Mr. Gibson.* —basically framed the debate at that point?

*The President.* No. I didn't say it was politically impossible. You say I should be recom-

mending more; I ask you to look at the vote in the Senate, which historically has been more willing to deal with this than the House, and look at what we passed. We passed closing the gun show loophole which, I don't care what you say or my friend says or these kids say, is a big deal. We passed it by one vote—one vote.

And you're saying, "Well, why didn't you recommend something more sweeping?" And I told you that I intend to recommend further measures, but I'd like to pass what we have passed through the Senate, because it makes a difference. The things that we passed in the Senate will make a difference.

Should we do more? Should people ought to have to register guns like they register their cars? Do I think that? Of course, I do. Of course, I do. Now—but I tell you, the American people may have one opinion, but they elected the Congress and the Congress doesn't have that opinion.

I'm going to do my best to move the Congress, and the people can move them, but we can only—how foolish would it be for me to be debating this issue when these things are before the Congress? They can save children's lives, and I should blow by them because they're not enough? I don't think so.

*Mr. Gibson.* I want to take you to the other room. There are some young kids in there who want to ask you about other things, about the glamorization of violence in the media, those kinds of things—about parental responsibility. We'll get to all of that. Come on in the other room, we'll do that.

*The President.* Good.

*Mr. Gibson.* Let's go to Diane in the Roosevelt Room.

#### *Discussion With Students*

[Following a commercial break, Mr. Gibson and Ms. Sawyer introduced the first student, whose sister was wounded in gunfire in Evanston, IL, and he asked how effective gun control legislation would be in preventing such accidents.]

*The President.* Well, I think, first of all, we can't say that any one law will make a difference. But I think if you look at the school shootings—and I think all of you know this, but we ought to say this to America—this is not just about school shootings, although they're very important, but 13 children are killed every

day by guns on the streets, in the neighborhoods, and various circumstances.

So I think there are basically three problems. You have more kids that are kind of at risk of violence. You have a culture that desensitizes and glorifies violence and desensitizes people to it. And it's way too easy to get guns.

And so what I think we have to do is to work on all three things. And we've got to pass as much legislation as we can that makes it—keeps guns out of the wrong hands, and basically makes it harder for kids and harder for criminals to get guns. And this legislation will do that. It will help us close some of the loopholes; it will help us strengthen the background checks. It will also do something that was very important at Littleton and will become increasingly important with the Internet giving so much information to kids: it will put a lot of our background requirements for guns into explosives, too, which I think are very important. After the Littleton thing, I think we can all see that.

But I can't guarantee that. There are over 200 million guns in American society now, in a country of about 260-plus million people. But we can make it a lot harder, and we can dramatically reduce the chances that such things will occur.

[*Ms. Sawyer introduced a video which demonstrated how easily a gun could be carried into schools. The discussion continued, and the First Lady responded to several questions.*]

*The President.* If I could just say one thing, to go back to put the two questions together, there are some schools, some high schools, which have hotlines which young people can call if other students bring guns to school, and they know two things if they call. They know, number one, that the children will not be outed, their identities won't be disclosed if they call, and, number two, that some authority will check on the presence of the gun in the school that day.

So I think that's really important. If it's a problem in schools throughout the country, it's a specific thing that some schools have used with great success.

*Ms. Sawyer.* Mr. President, if I could ask you, members of gun organizations say that the ability is there to do something about kids—6,000 kids in the last 2 years in schools found to have guns, but, in fact, only 13 were pros-

ecuted for it. Do you think there should be more prosecutions, and do you agree?

*The President.* I don't know. You know, I don't think—all those kids, the reason they know that and the only reason they know that is that since I've been President, we instituted a zero tolerance for guns in schools, so the kids were sent home if they had the guns.

Now, it's up to the local prosecutors to decide whether to prosecute them. But you should know that the general argument that prosecutions are down is simply not true. And Federal prosecutions are up by 30 percent, of serious crimes; and overall gun prosecutions, State and Federal, are up. And gun-related crimes are down.

This is a special problem—problems of violence against children by guns is a special problem that, in my view, you can make the prosecution argument. We ought to make it harder to get guns. We ought to deal with the culture, and we ought to deal with the schools and the communities and help the parents and the kids do more.

[*A student asked the President why it was not mandatory to have metal detectors and police in every school.*]

*The President.* Well, I think—let me say, generally we have not had a Federal law that requires schools to do metal detectors, but what we do is we provide funds every year to help schools buy the security equipment. And I believe—when I saw that young man there take the 12 guns out of his clothing, I thought maybe we should do more in that regard.

A lot of schools are, for obvious reasons, reluctant to have metal detectors. But I think that the schools that have them have not had these instances, basically because you can't get in—at least inside the school.

[*The discussion continued. A student from Heritage High School in Conyers, GA, told of an encounter in school in which Thomas J. Solomon, Jr., showed the student a gun. The student said he reported it to school authorities, who took some interim action but did not pursue the issue, and some weeks later Mr. Solomon allegedly shot six other students.*]

*The President.* What do you think they should have done?

*Student.* I think they should have done a lot more than they did. I think at least if they

didn't, they should have called his parents and maybe had them maybe even look for it. I was going to ask you what more could be done than what's already done about a suspected gun at school.

*The President.* These are questions that have also been asked in Colorado because of what was in the website, the kids' website and other places. And I think it's important that people like you, as I said, have a way to make these reports, and then, you know, they're going to be systematically followed up on, either by the school or the law enforcement.

I also think it's important that when a young person like that is obviously in trouble, you not only try to get the gun away, but you try to figure out what the real problem is and what kind of help the kids need. And then it's provided in some sort of systematic way. A lot of these kids, I am convinced, could be turned away from this before it's too late if they could have been identified early enough.

And so I think we need a combination of, you know, go after the source of the—go after the guns and all that, and trying to deal with the kids. And I think—again I would say, I've been amazed in how many of these cases—I don't know what the facts are in Pearl or in Paducah. I do know in Springfield, Oregon, because I went out there to talk to the people there, that there are a lot of people who were really concerned about that young man before this happened.

So I think—we're going to have a mental health conference with Mrs. Gore and the Vice President, Hillary and I are, in a few days, and we're going to talk about what more can be done when the kids know that somebody is in trouble, to go really help them before this happens. Just like you knew. There should have been someplace else you could go where you would know not only would they try to get the gun, but there would be somebody all over that kid, in a positive way, trying to figure out what the deal was and how to help him move away from it.

[*The discussion continued. A student noted that some youth were more sensitive to violence than others.*]

*The President.* But let's go back to what Missy said. I'm amazed that any of you said you were concerned about the video games, because most of the young people I've talked to, there's a

lot of support for tougher gun control and for better security and for more support services, but a lot of young people I've talked to say—they say I'm an old fogey when I talk about the movies and the video games.

But here's the point I want to make. I want to make the point Missy did. Most of the kids are fine and will be fine under any culture. It's true, they show them in Japan and Europe, and they don't have the killings. But what do we know about America? We know that in America, number one, we know more and do more of it in the aggregate. The average 18-year-old has seen 40,000 murders, and 200,000 violent instances over the media, number one—more of it. Number two, in our country our folks work harder. They travel more. They spend less time at home—on average, 22 hours a week—than they did 30 years ago. That's 2 years by the time you turn 18. Number three, it's easier to get guns.

So if you have vulnerable kids, where the line between reality and fantasy blurs, they are more likely to be influenced by this. And that's something I'd ask the rest of you to be sensitive to, because way over 90 percent of the kids are going to be fine, but it doesn't take many to change people's lives forever in a bad way.

[*The discussion continued.*]

*The President.* I'd like to ask a question. How many of you talked to your parents about this within 3 days of the Littleton shooting? I think that's very important, because one of the things that we don't know—you asked Hillary a hard question about the parents of the children involved; obviously, I don't know them; I've wondered so much—but I think it's important that we understand that a lot of children are strangers in their own homes, and that—including kids that will never commit crimes. And somehow, I think we've really got to do something to rekindle, to give both the kids and the parents the courage to start talking to each other again, because I think it would minimize the chances of those things occurring.

[*A student from Littleton, CO, said that a friend told her Dylan Klebold's parents were concerned about him and planned to talk to him when he got home from school on the day of the Columbine High School shooting. She also noted that other children played violent video games and listened to violent music but did not become*

*violent. She suggested that affection and acceptance had to be part of the solution.]*

*The President.* I agree. Can I ask you one question? I'd like to ask all of you a question about this. And again, all I know about this is what people like you have told me. That is, you know, Hillary and I, we watched the television, we talked to the families of the children that were killed when we went out there, and some of the young people who are still hurt. But I'd like for all of you to help us with this.

All the reports say that one of the things that drove these two young guys over the edge was that they felt that they were totally disrespected in the school, that they felt that there were groups that looked down on them and badmouthed them and tried to humiliate them, and that as a consequence, they not only wanted to get back at the people they thought had dissed them, but they were looking for somebody to look down on. And that's one of the things that made the African-American young man a target.

How many of these kids do you think are violent because they think their contemporaries, kids, treat them in a contemptible way?

*[The Littleton student responded that she did not believe the Columbine gunmen were after any specific person but shot people in the lunch-room randomly. Ms. Sawyer suggested that politicians should refuse to take money from entertainment companies that put out violent movies or video games.]*

*The President.* Well, would it have an impact? I don't think so, because then that would increase the relative influence of other people's contributions. I don't know. I think—let me just say this, our administration has taken on not only the gun issue, we have taken on the entertainment issue ever since '93. And I would like to point out something. Your network and others have adopted a TV rating system, supported the V-chip, which is coming in all the new televisions. The Internet people have helped us with screening technologies for parents, with closing loopholes in the rating systems for the games. I mean, I think there has been some progress here.

I think the real problem we've got in the media is that this violence sells, and I think that the rating system for the movies and for television is a little porous there. Again, I think

it's more the exposure of young people, before the lines between fantasy and reality are fully clarified. That's the one thing that I would say to the young man in the back that defended the "Doom" game.

Look, I like to go to action movies. I love movies. But what happens is, if you look at the aggregate amount of violence—and it's not any one movie. It's the aggregate amount that young people see and, in video games, participate in—by the time they're grown, in their young years, when they're most vulnerable, they are desensitized to the consequences of violence. There are over 300 studies which show this. This is not a matter of debate.

And I think the question is, what can we do to reduce the volume of violence to which our youngest people are exposed? And that's why we're doing what we can do on this, on the entertainment. But I will say this, the entertainment industry, at least in the beginning, has been more responsive to a lot of these things than the gun industry. Now the gun manufacturers are coming along, but I think the entertainment industry is going to have to do a lot more, a lot more.

*Mr. Gibson.* But just a quick question. Sony makes the "Doom" game—I don't mean to pick out that one game—but Sony is a huge contributor to the Democratic Party. So you have access to the president of Sony. If you picked up the phone and were talking to him, what would you say to him?

*The President.* I would ask him to change the game. And I think that we need to take steps to make sure that younger people don't get it. I think people get this stuff too young.

What you say, by the way, is right. Again I will say, most of the people that—you can show them things; they can play games or whatever; and they're not going to be affected. But what you have to be sensitive to is if you fill a society with this and you have more kids that are more vulnerable anyway because they have less supervision at home than in other societies and they have easier access to guns, then you have created a combustible mix which will lead you to more instances of young violence. That's the deal.

That's why—that's the argument I make to the entertainment industry all the time; that's why they should do more. And that's why the gun people should do more. And that's why parents and communities should do more. It's

why you should do more to try to help identify children like this.

[*The discussion continued. The next question directed to the President was from a student who asked about smart guns.*]

*The President.* First of all, I think it's very important. I think that one of the things we've been trying to do and that the gun manufacturers—and I want to say something positive about the people that are trying to help. The gun manufacturers, most of them, have agreed to work with us and now support legislation to require child trigger locks, which will be somewhat helpful. Now, older children can figure out how to undo them, but still they'll have a lot of accidental deaths, and they're important.

Pretty soon, you will have technology available which you can put into the guns that will raise the costs some in the beginning, like all technology does—but like all technology, the costs will come down quickly—which will mean that only people who have the right fingerprints can fire the gun. And that will be a huge thing.

Then, we'll have to do a lot of gun buy-back programs and other things in communities that will increase safety, and it's important.

[*A student who was cocaptain of her school's rifle team stated that the first thing she learned was safety.*]

*The President.* It's one thing that I would like to see, actually, the NRA do. When I was Governor of my State, I worked with them, and they did a lot of very good work on hunter education programs just like you're talking about, and nobody should have a gun that hasn't been trained to use it. You can't get a driver's license unless you can drive a car, and I completely agree with you about that.

[*A student asked if the President could explain what purpose automatic and semiautomatic guns served.*]

*The President.* No, but I tried to ban them all in 1994, and we were able to ban 19 kinds of assault weapons. But the people who were against what I was trying to do were able to keep some loopholes in the law, one of which we're closing now, to have these big magazines in the guns, you know, the big clips. And a lot of the imported weapons are still legal. So I spent the last 5 years trying to get rid of all them. I think they should all be rendered

illegal. They also grandfathered in those that were in existence before '94, but I think all of them ought to be taken off the markets. That's what I think. And I'm going to try to keep making progress with Congress to do that.

[*A student stated that it sounded like the President thought it would be good if gun prices went down after smart technology was developed.*]

*The President.* No, it's a good thing they'll go up.

[*She then said it was important to raise the price of weapons as high as possible, to keep them out of children's hands.*]

*The President.* I agree with you. I didn't mean to—I was just pointing out that when we try to get these things through Congress as requirements, that's one of the things that will always be said. But I think it ought to be—I think this identification thing Jonathan mentioned can make a big difference.

[*The discussion continued. A student who had accidentally wounded his best friend asked if the President believed that background checks could really keep guns out of the wrong hands.*]

*The President.* Yes, but it can't prevent all of them. That is, it—we have actual numbers on it. We know how many people we've prevented from getting handguns, because they had criminal records, since we've put it in. But there are so many guns that it doesn't prevent everybody from getting it.

And one of the real problems is, when children are in places where they have easy access to guns, then you can have what happened—you're a brave guy to be here. Where's your friend? Which one's your friend? You want to say something about this?

[*A student asked how someone who told authorities about another student with a gun could avoid becoming a victim.*]

*The President.* See, I went to T.C. Williams High School, right across the river here, where I don't think they have medical—excuse me—metal detectors.

*Mr. Gibson.* It's early. [*Laughter*]

*The President.* It's early. But they have this hotline, they have the student hotline. And if a student there knows that somebody has a gun who shouldn't, they know two things if they

call, and both things are important. One is, they know they won't be identified; and two is, they know there will be some responsible person to actually follow up on it. So I think that is something that other schools should consider doing.

[A student asked the President if he thought there was a difference between owning a hunting rifle or owning a handgun or assault rifle.]

*The President.* Well, first of all, a lot of avid sports people would tell you that they do some of that with handguns, too. But generally, yes, I think there's a big difference between assault weapons and other weapons. Some people claim they use them for sporting purposes, but no one needs them. And there is a difference between handguns and other weapons, because handguns are used more, they're easier to conceal, and they're more likely to be used for illegal purposes and less likely to be used for

legal purposes. Therefore, I think it is legitimate to have higher standards on owning them and greater requirements on background checks and greater requirements on whether they should be registered or not. That's what I believe.

NOTE: The interview began at approximately 7:05 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House, moving later to the Roosevelt Room for the discussion with students. In his remarks, the President referred to President Martti Ahtisaari of Finland; Special Envoy and former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin of Russia; President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); Columbine High School gunmen Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris; and Columbine shooting victim Isaiah Shoels. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady and the student participants.

## Remarks at a Breakfast for Representative Nick J. Rahall II June 4, 1999

Thank you. First of all, I want to say to Congressman Rahall and his family, and Congressman Wise and Mr. O'Neill—Congressman Patrick Kennedy was, a few moments ago, was here with us downstairs. I am very honored to be here and glad to have a chance to come here for Nick Rahall.

You know, he was talking all about the burdens of being 50. I thought it was burdensome, too, until I carefully considered the alternative. [Laughter] And I have enjoyed my advancing years ever since.

I want to say, too, a special word of thanks to the people who are here from West Virginia, a State that has been uncommonly good and generous to me and to Vice President Gore in two elections and in the times in between, a State that has struggled with a lot of economic problems from coal to steel that we have been working hard to address and will continue to do so. And I want to thank all of you for being here for Nick.

We both ran for Congress when we were 27. The only difference is I got beat, and he got elected. [Laughter] I've often wondered what would have happened in my life if I had

been elected to Congress when I was 27. [Laughter] The one thing I did miss was the chance to serve with Tip O'Neill, a man I admire very much, and I'm very glad that Tom is here today.

There are many things that I appreciate about Nick Rahall. I appreciate the work he's done in transportation. I appreciate the fact that he and Bob both have stood by me in pursuing an economic strategy that has really brought our country back and given us the biggest surplus in history and given us a chance not only to pay down our debt but to save Social Security and Medicare for the baby boom generation in a way that does not require any tax increases whatever and can, in fact, enable us to strengthen our economy. And I'm very grateful for that.

I'm very grateful that he has supported the efforts that I have tried to make to promote peace around the world. And like Nick and Bob, I hope that the announcement of the last few hours, the last day, in Kosovo portends a genuine agreement that will be honestly implemented and that will lead to real reversal of the ethnic cleansing there, that the refugees will