

Remarks on the Youth Antidrug Media Campaign August 2, 1999

The President. Thank you so much. Andy, you might consider politics when you get out of skateboarding. [Laughter] You have to fall down a lot. It's about as dangerous, and we could use you. I thought he did a terrific job. Let's give him another hand. [Applause]

General McCaffrey, thank you so much, and all your team, for the wonderful job you do. I met General McCaffrey when he was still in uniform, and I decided he could do just about anything he put his mind to, and I think he's just about proved it. I think he and the whole team, all of them who are here, have done a wonderful job. I'm grateful to them.

Jim Burke, thank you so much—you and the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, for everything you have done, and for the inspiration and the urging you have given to me these last 6½ years. Thank you, Peggy Conlon, and the Ad Council, for all you have done to make this media campaign a success, and I want to thank Senator Specter and Congressman Levin and Congressman Cummings for being here, because the Congress has been a critical part of this.

Let me say, before I get into my brief remarks and we watch the ads, which is why we all came here—because this is my first opportunity to meet with the media today, I want to say a word about this heat wave that is going on in our country that now has claimed at least 190 lives and caused great hardship, especially for a lot of our farmers and ranchers.

Emergency Assistance for Farmers

Our Secretary of Agriculture, Dan Glickman, today issued an emergency declaration for all of West Virginia and for counties in surrounding States which will give family farm operators eligibility for low-interest emergency loans. We're also working with local governments and private agencies to help farmers get water and hay to keep their livestock alive. It's literally a problem for them to keep their livelihoods alive. I'm also committed to working with this Congress to provide the resources to help our farmers and ranchers to deal with the crisis today and by fixing the farm bill for the future.

To others, especially our elderly who are very vulnerable in this heat, we have provided \$100

million to pay for air-conditioning and fans, and I expect we will be doing more things in the days ahead.

Youth Antidrug Media Campaign

Now, let me talk a little bit about this whole antidrug effort, and let me begin with something that has not yet been mentioned. We owe a profound debt to the men and women who are engaged in this struggle for our children's lives and future. All those who are here today or their groups have been mentioned. I also want to say a special word of appreciation to the young people who are here who remind us what this campaign is all about. And there are a lot of young people here today, and I want to thank all of them for being here.

I'd also like to say that we should not let this moment go by without acknowledging the enormous courage of a lot of our men and women in various Federal services and the armed services who are working to prevent drugs from coming here in the first place.

Last week we mourned the loss of five U.S. Army personnel who died with their Colombian colleagues when their antidrug reconnaissance plane crashed in the Andes. They perished far from home, but in a very real sense they gave their lives to protect our families, our neighborhoods, our Nation, indeed, our national security. We honor their commitment. We remember their sacrifice. And I'm sure all of us will join in a pledge to continue their work.

I also want to say that as much work as still remains to be done, I'd like to take a moment just to celebrate the work that all of you have done. When we were out there running for office in 1992, the Vice President had this hilarious rap about everything that should be up was down, and everything that should be down was up, and everything was all mixed up. And it is true. And one of the sad things that was up was drug use.

All of you, I suppose, have heard me say this, but I have had personal experience with the devastation drugs can bring to families. I know they can bring death, and, as I saw in my own family with my brother, they can also destroy lives. I also saw that they are not fatal if you survive them, that you can come back.

For all of you who deal with drug treatment and who help young people overcome their problems, I am personally, profoundly grateful.

Since I've been here, I've done what I could to work with people who were committed to turning our children away from drugs and saving more families from going through what my family did. And again I say, under the remarkable leadership of General McCaffrey and with the help of all the community groups and all the others here represented, we have seen the unrelenting increase in drug use begin to turn around. In the last 2 years, drug use has begun to decline among people of all ages for all types of drugs.

We've tried to do more with enforcement and prevention, more police on the street, doing more to keep drugs from coming into the United States, more drug testing of prisoners and parolees to break the link between drugs and crime. And of course, in December of 1997, we'd launched this sweeping effort to change the attitudes of an entire generation of young people with the unprecedented youth antidrug media campaign.

I'd like to just say a word here. Normally, the press in Washington focuses on what we are fighting about and what the parties disagree about. But we had enormous bipartisan support in Congress for this endeavor, and for that I am profoundly grateful.

It seemed a little awkward at first when General McCaffrey and I went to the Congress to ask for this money, but I kept pointing out—I said, “Look, guys, look how much money we raise every year to advertise. Every election, we advertise because we think that we have to get our message out. When I'm doing something up here people disagree with, groups get together and raise money, and they advertise, and they say the President is wrong.” And it's part of the American system. And here we've got a problem that is just as important, if not more important than anything else in our society, where we know we have a large number of our young people who may not be getting the right message, and it seemed to me totally illogical that we would not be using one of the most important weapons for influencing attitudes in a modern information age.

The media campaign appears to be working even better than we had thought across all grade levels, income levels, races, and genders. Today I will release the results of a detailed evaluation

of the second phase of this campaign in which we began rolling out the ads nationwide. This report shows that if you're a teenager or a parent, it is nearly impossible to avoid seeing or hearing our antidrug messages on television or radio several times a week. It shows the percentage of young people who said the ads made them stay away from drugs increased significantly during the course of the study.

We expected the ads would greatly increase awareness. What we didn't expect was that the ads would already have a measurable effect on attitudes. This is a very good sign. What it proves is, I suppose, what we should have known all along, that if advertising works in commerce and advertising works in politics, advertising ought to work on this issue as well.

I have to say a special word of appreciation to the Ad Council and all those who put the ads together, because they were, one, effective, and two, honest. And in order to have any enduring impact, I can tell you, having participated for 25 years, now, in doing political advertising, they have to be both effective and honest in order to last. And to all those who helped us put these ads together, I am very, very grateful.

Today we launch the next phase of the campaign. I think the most appropriate thing to do is just to show you a couple of our newest ads, and you will see that the gentleman who introduced me is in truth a professional athlete. [Laughter] So let's turn out the lights and watch the ad. We ought to turn the lights out. Otherwise, we won't be able to see them. [Laughter]

[At this point, videotapes of the ads were shown.]

The President. I told Andy that I had already seen him on television; even I, when I'm channel-surfing, sometimes catch the skateboarders. [Laughter] Every time I see him do that I think, you know, a couple of years ago I fell 6 inches and was hobbled for 6 months. [Laughter] Thank you.

Let me say, as important as this advertising is, it isn't enough. And I want to say a special word of appreciation for the partnerships at the national and community level, because everywhere young people go during every part of the day, they will see more than the television. They will see the message that drugs are wrong; they can kill; they are illegal.

This will outdo the “Star Wars” promotion for name and brand. You will see not just television, radio, newspapers, magazines, the Internet; you will see this message on bus stops and subway cars, movie screens, and video games. It will be in the classroom through cable programming in schools and substance abuse materials we’ll provide the teachers.

It will be part of after-school activities, through organizations like the YMCA. The message will be part of an increasing number of sporting events, like basketball tournaments sponsored by the New York Knicks. And last month during the X Games, not only did we place antidrug messages everywhere the TV viewer could constantly see them, we also handed out stickers with the slogan, “Get vertical, not high.” They became one of the hottest items for the hundreds of thousands of spectators who came to the X Games.

And as General McCaffrey said, we will get the word out in 11 languages other than English, including Spanish, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Navajo and Lakota, a language I just tried out when I was at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

I think that this phase will be even more effective than the last phase of the campaign. And I think you will see real impacts on the behavior of our young people and that teen drug use will continue to decline.

But I would also say that no matter how effective all of you are, we still have to have more help as close to home as possible, with

the parents sitting down and talking to their children, not waiting until their children are using drugs to talk about them, and with all the teachers, the coaches, the mentors, the community police, the health care workers and, of course, the religious leaders, making up what the First Lady always calls the village, that have to help raise our children.

And finally, I’d like to say that young people should not ever minimize the impact they can have not only on their own lives but on their friends and their siblings. In every school in America there’s a young person who is a good kid but just a little lost or confused, who can be reached by a friend, very often who can be reached by a friend more than the President or any other figure in apparent authority.

So I say to all of you, first, thanks, and second, let’s keep going. Together, we can give every single child in this country a chance to grow up in a world where the only limits are the outlines of their hopes and dreams. Not every child can be a skateboard champion like Andy, but every child can fly.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:57 a.m. in Presidential Hall (formerly Room 450) in the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Andy Macdonald, professional skateboarder, who introduced the President; James E. Burke, chairman, Partnership for a Drug-Free America; and Peggy Conlon, president, Ad Council.

Remarks at a Memorial Service for Dan Dutko

August 2, 1999

First, I would like to say on behalf of Hillary and myself how grateful we are for the life of our friend and how grateful we are for all of you who have come to be with us in honoring it and for those who have spoken before. I have now laughed, and I have cried, and I still miss him terribly.

Of all the metaphors we might use about Dan, most of which are funny, I think one which is not funny that really is best is that he was a gardener, for in all of our lives he planted seeds that bore fruit. In the Psalms,

it says, “A good man shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. His leaves shall not wither. Whatsoever he do, it shall prosper.” Dan made the Earth bloom, wherever he planted himself.

The work and the people he touched were his blossom. All of us in this room, those of us who are in politics, those of us who are in private life, however he knew or touched us, he made us blossom more than we would have otherwise. And therefore, as decreed in the Psalms, his memory will never wither.