

Oct. 21 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

to get guns, even if they're criminals," I would point out that we've got a higher percentage of people behind bars, serving longer average sentences, than anybody else. If that were the answer, why are the police telling us to take more sensible measures to restrict access to guns?

And if you have this argument, let me give you a statistic that will trump any argument. Forget about deliberate crimes. The death rate from accidental shooting of children in America is 9 times higher than that of the next 25 biggest industrial countries combined—combined.

So don't let anybody tell you that we don't need to do more to keep guns away from kids and crooks. We do. And don't let anybody tell you that we can't do it without interfering with the constitutional right to hunt, to engage in proper sports shooting and all those things. We're not talking about that. And don't let anybody tell you that 50,000 more police on our street, 50,000 more people like those we honor today, wouldn't make America a safer place, not only by catching criminals but by physically being there and working with community leaders by preventing crime in the first place.

We've got all these opportunities on the edge of this new millennium, with the strongest economy in our lifetimes. I don't think it's too much to say that we ought to use these opportunities to save Social Security and Medicare, to give our kids a world-class education with 100,000 teachers, and to keep working to make America the safest and the healthiest big country on Earth.

I am proud that all of you are working with us to achieve that goal. And if we keep working, I still think we will get it done.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas J. Scotto, president, National Association of Police Organizations, who introduced the President; Attorney General Jeremiah W. Nixon of Missouri; Mayor Colette Lafuente of Poughkeepsie, NY; and Mary Beth Talley, who protected her friend Heather McDonald during the shooting at Wedgewood Baptist Church in Fort Worth, TX.

Statement on the Anniversary of the Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin

October 21, 1999

Four years ago today, according to the Hebrew calendar, Yitzhak Rabin was murdered by an assassin in Tel Aviv. He was a Prime Minister, a general, a diplomat, and a courageous soldier in the battle for peace. All of us who were his friends still mourn his death.

Twelve days from now, world leaders will gather in Oslo to honor Yitzhak Rabin's memory. I will attend on behalf of the American people. It was in Oslo, 6 years ago, that Israelis and Palestinians made the crucial decision to try to

work together to achieve peace. Now, Prime Minister Barak, Chairman Arafat, and I will come together in Oslo to build on that legacy and move closer to Rabin's goal: a permanent peace between Israel and the Palestinian people.

There is much hard work ahead, with difficult decisions for all sides. But as we look back in sorrow to mourn the passing of a great man, we must do everything in our power on behalf of the cause to which he gave his life.

Statement on House Action on Legislation on Education Opportunities

October 21, 1999

Making our schools work for all America's children is the most important challenge we

face. By passing H.R. 2 today, the House took an important step toward improving educational

opportunities for the Nation's most disadvantaged students. Although I have a number of concerns with this bill, I am pleased that H.R. 2 reflects a bipartisan consensus on several principles of the education reform plan I sent Congress earlier this year. As I said in my State of the Union Address, the Federal Government has a responsibility not only to invest more in our poorest schools, but to demand more results in return.

In particular, the bill continues the work of standards-based reform, expands public school choice, and recognizes the importance of holding schools accountable for results. I am pleased that a solid bipartisan majority in the House

voted to reject the false promise of vouchers. I am also pleased that the House, by passing the Mink amendment, chose to incorporate gender equity provisions in this legislation.

As the reauthorization process continues, I will work with Congress to improve certain aspects of this bill, including provisions for students with limited English proficiency as well as provisions that target funds to our neediest students, increase the quality of Title I instructors, and ensure that accountability systems are workable. We have more work to do to enact a strong, comprehensive plan to hold schools accountable for results. I urge Congress to continue moving forward.

Statement on Signing the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area Act of 1999

October 21, 1999

I am pleased today to sign into law S. 323, which creates the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park in Colorado as America's 55th national park.

The Black Canyon, carved over eons by the unyielding waters of the Gunnison River, is a true natural treasure. Its nearly vertical walls, rising half a mile high, harbor one of the most spectacular stretches of wild river in America. No other canyon in North America combines

the remarkable depth, narrowness, and sheer-ness of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

This bipartisan bill demonstrates once again that preserving our environment for future generations is a cause that transcends party lines. In that spirit, I urge Congress to fully fund my lands legacy initiative this year and to work with me to secure permanent funding to continue these efforts well into the 21st century. Together, we can ensure that other treasures like the Black Canyon are preserved for all time.

Statement on Signing the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area Act of 1999

October 21, 1999

Today I have signed into law S. 323, the "Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area Act of 1999."

This Act represents more than a decade of hard work by the people of the Western Slope of Colorado to bring to the Black Canyon of the Gunnison the recognition it deserves. Bipartisan support from the Colorado delegation and both Houses of Congress led this effort to establish the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National

Park—our 55th National Park—and the adjacent Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area. I would like to commend Representatives Mark Udall, Scott McInnis, and Diana DeGette for their leadership on this legislation in the House of Representatives, and I would particularly like to commend and congratulate Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, who has worked for over a decade on this effort.

In the 1930s, President Herbert Hoover established and President Franklin D. Roosevelt