

Mar. 15 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

So I thank the folks who are here. I wish Representative Lofgren well, and I particularly appreciate the leadership of the women Members of the Congress in this issue that affects all of us.

I would like to now call on someone who, of all the people on this stage, has paid the highest price for our failure to do the right thing by our country, Representative Carolyn McCarthy.

[At this point, Representatives Carolyn McCarthy, Constance A. Morella, and Zoe Lofgren made brief remarks.]

The President. I want to leave you with two thoughts. First of all, not many people who pay the price Carolyn McCarthy did wind up having the personal strength to run for Congress. One of the biggest problems here is most of the people out there whose kids get killed in crimes or by accident, it's all they can do to put their own lives back together, take care of the rest of their kids, and go on with their lives. I can't believe that Suzann Wilson is still doing this after all these years. There is only a—it was just kind of a God's grace that Jim and Sarah Brady happened to be nationally prominent people and in a situation where they could go on. Mike Barnes is trying to organize people that don't have anything like the natural inclination or ability to come up with the kind of money and power and then employ the kind of tactics that the typical lobby group does. But they're everywhere.

Yesterday I was contacted by a man that I've known for many years, to remind me of the incredible damage done to his family when his

son and his son's friend were playing with a gun that killed the friend. His son doesn't have a mark on him, but it took him years to get over it, watching his best friend die there. There are people like this everywhere. And they shouldn't be denied and disenfranchised just because they're not organized. You have to speak for them.

The second thing I want to say is Congressman John Lewis is here. The Sunday before last, I joined him in the 35th anniversary of marching over the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, a march that led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act. People in our lifetime, those of us that are old enough, over 35, actually died so all Americans could vote. I don't think they marched and died so that their votes would vanish in a howl of special interest politics in Washington. That's not what the Constitution or the Bill of Rights or the civil rights revolution was all about.

This is about more than guns. This is about whether democracy works. So I ask you, don't just go out and talk about how well these women did today and how moved you are. Do something. Mobilize your friends to do something. We can win this battle with your help.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Michael D. Barnes, president, and Sarah Brady, chair, Handgun Control, Inc., and former White House Press Secretary James S. Brady, who was wounded in the 1981 assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan.

Statement on the Congressional Budget Resolution

March 15, 2000

Today the Republican Congress took a first step on a risky budget that threatens to undermine the fiscal discipline that has led to our current economic prosperity. The budget blueprint they have endorsed fails to strengthen Social Security or Medicare, takes us off the path to paying down the debt by 2013, and threatens to slash key priorities like education, law enforcement, and the environment. It was the

wrong approach for America last year—it is the wrong approach for America this year.

Republican leaders should work with me on a responsible budget that strengthens Social Security and Medicare, adds a prescription drug benefit, pays down the debt by 2013, and invests in education and other key priorities. Let's work together to meet America's long-term challenges and keep our economy strong.