

*Apr. 21 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000*

together to lift the yoke of poverty and oppression that crushes so many lives around the world. Let us recognize that, in Jesus' Resurrection, we see both the promise and the proof of love's capacity to triumph over the forces of misunderstanding, fear, and hatred.

As millions of Americans gather with loved ones to share the joy of this blessed holiday, Hillary and I extend our best wishes to all for a wonderful Easter celebration.

BILL CLINTON

## Letter to the Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee on Proposed Gun Safety Legislation

*April 21, 2000*

*Dear Chairman Hyde:*

As you know, yesterday marked the anniversary of the tragic shootings at Columbine High School—and the date by which I had called on Congress to enact commonsense gun safety legislation. The passing of this deadline is a deep disappointment. When nearly 12 of our nation's children are killed by gunfire every day, we have an urgent responsibility to do all we can to reduce gun violence. That is why I am grateful for your good-faith efforts to seek agreement, despite tremendous pressure on Congress from the gun lobby. I was also glad to see that you joined Representative Conyers last week in urging Chairman Hatch to promptly convene the juvenile justice conference and to move forward at last on this legislation. And I appreciated receiving your most recent proposal to reach a compromise.

I still have serious concerns about aspects of your latest proposal that I fear would create new loopholes for criminals to buy guns. But I am confident that if we can keep working together in good faith, we can reach agreement on a strong, commonsense bill that I can sign into law.

I was especially encouraged by your recent commitment on "Meet the Press" and in your letter to Mr. Conyers to ensure that persons under felony indictments remain subject to full, three-day background checks. It is critical that we make the same effort to stop criminals from buying guns at gun shows that we already make at gun stores.

In order to prevent fraud, protect privacy, and fully enforce the nation's gun laws—goals we both share—I believe we must make National Instant Criminal Background Check System records available for a sufficient period of

time rather than immediately destroying them. However, as a gesture of good faith, I am willing to meet you halfway on this important issue, by requiring records to be destroyed within 90 days, instead of 180 days as provided under current law. With this compromise, we can address your concerns while preserving this significant law enforcement tool. I hope this step will help break the current logjam, and bring your colleagues back to the conference table.

We still have other important issues to resolve. I remain concerned about aspects of your proposal that would: leave open the gun show loophole by letting criminals buy guns at flea markets and by cutting short existing background checks on persons with certain mental health histories and domestic violence restraining orders; undermine the ban on importation of high-capacity ammunition clips; weaken longstanding controls on interstate firearms sales; and fail to require vital record-keeping provisions needed by law enforcement to trace guns sold at gun shows that later turn up in crimes.

Despite these significant outstanding issues, I believe we can reach an agreement. It is my sincere hope that in the coming weeks, we can work together to address our common goal of closing the gun show loophole and ensuring that our nation's gun laws are fully enforced without weakening current gun laws in the process. Neither of us is interested in a compromise that would serve only to jeopardize public safety and the effectiveness of law enforcement. I look forward to working with you to pass this commonsense legislation, and I encourage you to continue urging Chairman Hatch to allow the conferees to meet and consider this legislation. As you have stated, our efforts will come to nothing until that happens. Only by allowing an open

and honest debate in conference and by working out our differences can we do right by the American people on this vital issue. We owe it to the families of Littleton, and the thousands

more who lose their lives in gunfire each year in America, to get this done now.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON

## The President's Radio Address

*April 22, 2000*

Good morning, and happy Earth Day. I've always thought it appropriate that Earth Day falls in this season of renewal and hope, as millions of Americans celebrate Easter and Passover. As we celebrate the first Earth Day of the 21st century, I want to challenge all of us to renew our commitment to protect and preserve God's precious gift to us, our earthly home.

Last weekend in California I stood beneath a magnificent sequoia tree, more than 1,000 years old, to announce permanent protection for more than 30 giant sequoia groves. And I was grateful for every opportunity the Vice President and I have had to act as stewards of our environment over the last 7 years.

All Americans can be proud of the tremendous progress we've made since the first Earth Day 30 years ago. Our air, water, and land are cleaner, and we've protected millions of acres of America's green places. But today I want to focus on the most critical environmental challenge we face in this new century, global warming.

The 1990's were the hottest decade on record, and the first 3 months of 2000 were the hottest here in 100 years. Scientists say that the temperature rise is at least partly due to human activity, and that if left unchecked, climate change will result in more violent storms, more economic disruptions, and more permanent flooding of coastal areas.

If we value our coastlines, our farm lands, and our vital biodiversity, we must build a national consensus to reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases and to help others around the world do the same. Our Government must lead by example.

Today I'm announcing two Federal initiatives that point the way to a cleaner environment and a stronger economy. First, I'm issuing an Executive order requiring that Federal agencies

reduce the amount of petroleum their vehicle fleets use by 20 percent in 5 years. We can do this with technology we already have. For example, the Postal Service has purchased 500 electric trucks and may purchase more than 5,000. Here in Washington, DC, 2,600 Federal and local government vehicles are running on clean natural gas or ethanol. Next month we'll open the first of seven gas stations offering those fuels here, and I'll order every White House vehicle that can use these fuels to make the switch. This Executive order will cut oil consumption by 45 million gallons a year, help stop global warming, and ease pressure on gas prices.

Second, I'm also announcing new incentives to cut pollution and greenhouse gases while we help Federal workers across the country reduce the growing hassle of commuting. All Federal workers now will be able to set aside up to \$65 tax-free every month to pay for public transportation. And in the Washington area, every Federal agency will actually fund some or all of its employees' public transportation costs.

It is clear citizens and businesses across America are building support for a strong response to global warming. But one voice is still missing, the United States Congress. While the science on climate change has grown stronger and the need for American leadership has grown greater, some in Congress have buried their heads even deeper in the sand. I urge them to recognize that reversing global warming will strengthen our economy while safeguarding our future.

In the next 20 years, the international energy market will reach \$5 trillion, and consumers everywhere increasingly will demand clean energy. We're the world leader in those technologies. We should be promoting them, not denying their need. Instead, for the past 7 years, Congress has blocked our initiatives to fight climate change and cut America's fuel bills.