

direction of the country and we want to continue to change built on that, or whether we say, “Well, we feel so good now, what they say sounds good; I think we’ll go back to their economic policy and their education policy and their health care policy and their environmental policy and their foreign policy.” This is a huge, huge decision.

And that’s why I thought it was a good thing for Hillary to run. Because I’ve been doing this a long time. I don’t think any State ever had two Senators working together that were remotely as good as Dale Bumpers and David Pryor. They were the best team I ever saw. I served with 150 Governors, and I’ve seen another 100 run through the White House since I’ve been there. You know, I realize I am prejudiced in this, but I know a lot about public service and public service efforts. And I have spent the last almost 30 years, now, having conversations with my wife about every conceivable issue.

I watched her when she started the Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families. I watched her when she ran this education standards program here, when a lot of our kids couldn’t even get science and math courses in their schools. I watched her labor to try to get rid of all the ridiculous Federal barriers to people adopting children, and to try to get us to adopt policies up there that would enable working families

to afford health insurance and deal with a whole lot of other issues.

And in my whole life, I have never known anybody that had a better grasp of the issues, a better ability to organize, a better ability to get people who thought they would never get along to work together, and could get up every day and just keep going, than Hillary—never, not a person.

So, I think the Senate would be a much better place if she were there. I think she would do a superb job for the people of New York. I think she would be great for America. I think you know that, and you will never know how grateful we are that you’re here today. And I hope you’ll make her feel welcome.

Come on up, Hillary.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:50 p.m. in Hall A at the New Statehouse Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Representatives Vic Snyder and Marion Berry; former Senator Dale Bumpers and his wife, Betty; former Senator David H. Pryor and his wife, Barbara; William H. Bowen, former dean, University of Arkansas at Little Rock School of Law; Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani of New York City; Enrique Moreno, nominee for U.S. Court of Appeals Judge for the Fifth Circuit. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Statement on the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Report *May 7, 2000*

Today the FBI released new 1999 statistics showing that crime is down for an unprecedented eighth year in a row, continuing the longest decline on record. The decline in crime has reached Americans living in communities of every size and in every region across the country. Data from the 1999 FBI Uniform Crime Report show that overall crime fell 7 percent, with crime down in every category of offense. Violent crime dropped 7 percent, including an 8 percent drop in murder, and property crime fell an additional 7 percent. In 1999 there were over 8,000 fewer murders than in 1992.

This good news confirms that our anticrime strategy—more police officers on the beat, fewer illegal guns and violent criminals on the street—is having a powerful impact. We know we can turn the tide on crime, because we have. But despite this success, we cannot let up on our efforts. Gunfire continues to claim the lives of nearly 12 children every day, and we need to work on every front to reduce gun violence. With Mother’s Day approaching, I will continue to urge the Congress to put the interests of America’s families over those of the gun lobby and pass commonsense gun safety measures to keep guns out of the wrong hands. Together,

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we can make America the safest big country on Earth.

NOTE: This statement was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 5 but was

embargoed for release until 6:01 p.m. on May 7. It was also made available on the White House Press Office Actuality Line.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Million Mom March Organizers and an Exchange With Reporters

May 8, 2000

The President. Hello, everybody. I just finished a meeting with Attorney General Reno and Secretary Shalala and Chief of Staff Podesta, and I have met with all these folks, these women and their men supporters who are the organizers of the Million Mom March. They're going to be here and in over 60 other cities on Mother's Day, marching for commonsense gun safety legislation, asking Congress to act, building on the grassroots efforts that have brought success in the petition drive in Colorado and the Legislatures of Maryland, Massachusetts, and California.

And I think what they're doing is profoundly important. We in the administration want to do whatever we can to support them. They are taking a stand for their children. Many of them have lost loved ones. They have lost children. They have lost spouses. And there will be many more just like them who are here.

They want Congress to act on the commonsense gun legislation before it, and of course, they want Congress to go beyond that to licensing, registration. They have not proposed taking away anybody's gun. They have proposed making life a lot safer for the American people and their children. And I think what they're doing is a very noble and good thing. I hope it will prompt Congress to act.

It is unconscionable—it is now over a year after Columbine and over 10 months since they've had a chance to pass this legislation. And I hope their presence here will—and throughout the country—will be successful. I am quite sure they will succeed over the long run if they stay with it, because they represent the heavy majority of the American people, and they have borne a heavy burden in their own lives which they have been willing to put into this effort. And I'm very grateful to them.

Gun Safety Legislation

Q. What's stopping Congress from acting? At least pressure from the moms—

The President. Well, we'll see if this makes a difference. I think that the people in the gun lobby have historically been very effective. But I think that if you look at the specifics of the legislation before Congress, there's a huge majority of the American people for it. And I think what all these folks are going to remind them of on Mother's Day is that they're watching, and they want action.

And this is not an issue that can be dealt with in business as usual and buried for the—*[inaudible]*—interest groups. It needs to be resolved, and I hope it will be. And if it does, it will be far more because of them than because of us. The only way we can pass this is if people have to look into the eyes of parents who have lost their loved ones, if they have to look into the eyes of people who have lost their spouses, their brothers, their sisters, and answer, why don't we have this commonsense safety legislation; why is this the only area of our national life where we don't have prevention as our primary strategy?

They won't be able to answer that. You can't talk to these folks that have been talking to us this morning and answer that.

Death of John Cardinal O'Connor

Q. Mr. President, you're going to the funeral of Cardinal O'Connor today. Can you give us some thoughts this morning on his impact on America and religious life, and what his passing might mean for the future?

The President. Well, I'm going because he was a leader of the Catholics and the biggest Catholic diocese in the country and because, in particular, he was a devoted chaplain in the