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to his children, who represent the best tradition of service to others.

I do want to thank, since it's been mentioned, the National Gallery for the gifts of art to the White House—on loan. [*Laughter*] And I do want to say that I'm glad you've got enough left over to fill these wonderful buildings with so many extraordinary works of art.

Tonight we honor not only the contributions of Andrew Mellon and his family, but we take time to underscore the partnership between the United States and the citizens who have done so much to preserve and enhance artistic institutions in the United States.

In this time of budget-cutting and belt-tightening, the Federal, State, and local governments together only provide a small fraction of the support for our common cultural life. That's why the contributions of people like those of you who are here tonight are crucial to the continuing vitality of our institutions.

I must say that one of the most difficult things that I have to face as President is the sure knowledge that if I fail to relieve the burden on future generations of the enormous debt which has been built up, I will be saddling our children, our grandchildren, with something that will always handicap our economy. And yet, it is difficult for me and for the Members of Congress not to be able to give more funds to things that we really believe in. We will continue to do what we can to support the arts, but we need for you to continue to do what you can as well. We would all be not only less well-educated but, in a fundamental sense, less human than we ought to be were it not for the opportunity to spend time in places like the National Gallery.

I also want to say a special word of appreciation to those of you associated with the Gallery who support the educational programs and the outreach of the Gallery. You know, I grew up in a small town in my home State, and I never will forget the first time I went to the State's art gallery. I thought I had died and gone to heaven. Now there are children all across this country that, because of the outreach programs of galleries, see pictures, understand art, develop a level of cultural awareness and sensitivity that would be absolutely unthinkable without these programs. So for the educational efforts you have all made, I say thank you.

And if you'll give me one more indulgence, I want to say a special word of thanks for the astonishing generosity of two people who are here tonight, Walter and Leonore Annenberg, who have done so much to help us to promote education in this country.

I was pleased when we stood in the line tonight, how many of you came through and said something like, ''Well, I'm from a little town in Missouri.'' ''I've been to your State,'' or ''I understand something about your background.'' I think sometimes people think too quickly that these great magnificent works of art can only be appreciated by those of us who are fortunate enough to live in the great cities of our country, to assume the high positions in business and government and elsewhere. But if you look at the life stories of the artists that we honor by hanging their wonderful pictures in these galleries, you will see a much more typical picture of ordinary life at every age and time. You have helped us to bind up one another in a common culture and to understand our connections to the past so that we can better hand down our values to the future. For that, the United States is in your debt.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 p.m. at the National Gallery of Art. In his remarks, he referred to Ruth Carter Stevenson, chair, and Robert H. Smith, president, board of trustees of the National Gallery of Art; and director of the National Gallery of Art Earl A. Powell III, and his wife, Nancy.

Remarks on Legislation To Ban Assault Weapons and an Exchange With Reporters

May 5, 1994

The President. In a few weeks the Congress will pass, and I will be able to sign, landmark legislation to fight crime in this country. Working together we have been able to show that crime is not a partisan issue. It's an American issue, and it requires com-

prehensive solutions, more punishment, more prevention, more police officers.

This afternoon, the House of Representatives will be considering a key part of that strategy, a law that bans 19 deadly assault weapons that pose a clear and present danger to our citizens and to our police officers. Just 2 years ago, a similar law was defeated by a very wide margin in the House. Now we're a few votes away from a dramatic strike against these deadly weapons and the criminals who use them.

Congressman Steve Neal, in an act of conviction and courage, has joined the ranks of House Members who support our local police and fight for safe neighborhoods, joining forces with law enforcement and standing up to a lot of the misapprehension and fear and misinformation that has been spread by the opponents of this very sensible crime control measure. I want to thank Steve Neal, and the citizens across this country who are concerned about this terrible problem are in his debt.

The vote to keep dangerous assault weapons out of the hands of criminals occurs this afternoon. Members are having to choose and make difficult choices between supporting the local police in their efforts to disarm criminals who can use these weapons to kill lots of people and those who are spreading fears about the reach of this law.

Today, the American people hope and believe that common sense and the common good should prevail. With the help of people like Steve Neal, it will. I'm very grateful to him, and I wanted to give him the chance to say a few words this morning before we have the vote this afternoon.

Congressman.

Representative Steve Neal. Thank you, sir.

The President. Thank you so much.

Representative Neal. Thank you. Well, I would say that the President is right about this. It is the first responsibility of our Government to protect our citizens. There is a war going on on the streets of America, mostly in the big cities, and the police are outgunned. Now they say they need this legislation to help them protect us and our families against violent criminals. So we ought to give them this tool that they say they need to protect us against violence.

Caning in Singapore

Q. Mr. President, what do you think of the caning of the American in Singapore?

The President. I think it was a mistake, as I said before, not only because of the nature of the punishment related to the crime but because of the questions that were raised about whether the young man was, in fact, guilty and had voluntarily confessed.

Q. What are you going to do about it, Mr. President?

The President. Well, we're discussing that, actually, as we speak here, what would be an appropriate statement by our Government in the aftermath of this.

Assault Weapons

Q. [*Inaudible*]—if the assault ban fails in Congress today, is there any administrative action you could take, say, through the Treasury Department, to ban these weapons yourself in the Executive order or prohibition?

The President. I don't believe we can do that. There may be some things that we can do that will minimize the problem. But I don't think any options that are available to us will be as effective as the ban on these assault weapons.

I do want to say, as I have talked to Members, there are basically two classes of concerns among those who wish to vote for this bill. And I am convinced a majority, if they could vote anonymously, would vote for this bill. And there are two classes of concerns among those people. One is, some of the administrative requirements, which we'll circulate a letter today that Congressman Schumer and Mr. Synar and others have worked on, to satisfy the people who are worried about the recordkeeping requirements, that all those concerns, those practical concerns can be fixed in the conference report. The other is the so-called camel's-nose-inside-the-tent theory. A lot of our Members are being told by folks back home that they have been convinced by the opponents of this bill that today it's these assault weapons, which they don't own, and tomorrow it'll be some legitimate hunting weapon, which they do own.

Well, that's why the bill contains the list of over 600 specific weapons that are protected. So I hope that we can, in effect, just debunk that, can overcome that argument by the time of the vote this afternoon. Those are the two things I've been hearing.

I was on the phone until about midnight last night. And I've made several calls again this morning working on this issue. And I believe we have a chance. It's very difficult, as you know; we were way, way down when we started and counted out right up until the 11th hour. But we may still have a chance to pass this because people like Steve Neal have been willing to come forward.

Supreme Court Nominee

Q. Mr. President, the Wall Street Journal says that Judge Richard Arnold is now your favorite to become the next Supreme Court Justice. Should he be penalized because he's from Arkansas? Is he your favorite?

The President. Well, first of all, I have no comment on whether I have a favorite or not. And secondly, he shouldn't be penalized because he's from Arkansas. I mean, he was first in his class at Harvard and Yale; he's the chief judge of the 8th Circuit; and he's been head of the Appellate Judges Association. So I don't think anyone would question—it would be difficult to find, just on terms of those raw qualifications, an appellate judge with equal or superior qualifications. I don't think any American would expect someone to be disqualified because they happen to come from my State.

Q. When will we learn about your selection?

The President. Well, there's one or two other things going on here, but we're working on it. We're spending a good deal of time on it. It won't be long.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:50 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks Announcing Assistance to South Africa

May 5, 1994

Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to all of you. Last week we watched with wonder as the citizens of South Africa went to the polls, as voters lined up for miles and miles, coming on crutches and in wheelchairs, waiting patiently, crossing the countryside to exercise their franchise, to create a new nation conceived in liberty and empowered by their redemptive suffering.

I have just spoken with President-elect Mandela and with President de Klerk. I congratulated Mr. Mandela on his victory and told President de Klerk that he clearly deserves tremendous credit for his leadership. Their courage, their statesmanship, along with the leadership of Chief Buthelezi and others, has made this transition smoother than many thought possible.

South Africa is free today because of the choices its leaders and people made. Their actions have been an inspiration. We can also be proud of America's role in this great drama. Because those of you here today and many others have helped to keep freedom's flame lit during the dark night of apartheid, Congress enacted sanctions to help squeeze legitimacy from the apartheid regime. Students marched in solidarity. Stockholders held their companies to higher ethical standards. America's churches, both black and white, took up the mantle of moral leadership. And throughout the fight, American civil rights leaders here helped to lead the way. Throughout, South Africa's cause has been also an American cause. Last week's miracle came to pass in part because of America's help. And now we must not turn our backs.

Let me begin by saying that we all know South Africa faces a task of building a tolerant democracy and a successful market economy and that enabling the citizens of South Africa to reach their potential, economically, is critical to preserving the tolerant democracy. To show that reconciliation and democracy can bring tangible benefits, others will have to help. I'm convinced South Africa can become a model for the entire continent. And America must be a new and full partner with that new government, so that it can deliver on its promise as quickly as possible.

We've already begun. Over the past year, the United States sent experts to South Africa to negotiate a new constitution—or to help them negotiate the new constitution. We provided considerable assistance to help