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down the most severely distressed housing projects. Also, the bill contains harmful riders that would transfer HUD's Fair Housing activities to the Justice Department and eliminate Federal preferences in the section 8, tenant-based program.

The bill provides less than I requested for the medical care of this Nation's veterans. It includes significant restrictions on funding for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs that appear designed to impede him from carrying out his duties as an advocate for veterans. Further, the bill does not provide necessary funding for VA hospital construction.

For these reasons and others my Administration has conveyed to the Congress in earlier communications, I cannot accept this bill. This bill does not reflect the values that Americans hold dear. I urge the Congress to send me an appropriations bill for these important priorities that truly serves the American people.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
December 18, 1995.

Remarks on Signing the Memorandum on Federal Arrestee Drug Testing and an Exchange With Reporters

December 18, 1995

The President. I want to welcome the Attorney General, United States Attorneys Eric Holder of Washington, DC, and Kathryn Landreth of Nevada; the Attorney General of Minnesota, Skip Humphrey; District Attorney Lynne Abraham of Philadelphia; District Attorney Michael Barnes of South Bend, Indiana, who is president of the National District Attorneys Association; and Jeremy Travis of the National Institute of Justice. I thank all of them for joining me here today.

I am about to sign a directive to the Attorney General instructing her to take the next step in our administration's all-out effort to break the cycle of crime and drugs.

The criminal justice systems of our country are overburdened with drug-abusing defendants who cycle through the system while continuing to use drugs. Far too many criminals brought into our system have a substance abuse problem. In fact, a 1993 study by the Justice Department found that more than half of the arrestees tested positive for an illicit substance. Unless we break the cycle of drugs and crime, criminal addicts will end up back on the street, committing more crimes and then right back in the criminal justice system still hooked on drugs. That's not fair to the taxpayers, the crime victims, or the American public. The cycle must be broken.

All across our country employers have accepted responsibility to reduce the level of drug use in the workplace. Teachers and coaches have accepted the responsibility to reduce the level of drug use in our schools. Now it is time for agencies in our criminal justice system to use all their power to reduce drug use by Federal arrestees.

With this directive, when you enter the Federal criminal justice system, you will be tested. If you have been taking drugs, you should suffer the consequences. The administration is committed to breaking this link between crime and drugs. Indeed, if we could break it, we could dramatically lower the crime rate.

As a nation, there is only one message we can send: Continued drug use is unacceptable. We can't have a comprehensive crime-fighting effort until we end drug offenders' habits. That's why it's critical that the criminal justice system put all its power behind cleaning up drug-abusing criminals.

This directive is another example in which the Federal criminal justice system can serve as a model for States. I'm very honored to be joined by the Minnesota Attorney General, Mr. Humphrey, and the District Attorneys of Philadelphia and South Bend, Indiana. When they leave here today they're going home to ask their State legislatures to follow our lead in making sure all offenders are drug-tested. I call upon every Governor, every State assembly, every State attorney general to do the same.

I'm proud of our antidrug strategy. It combines tough enforcement with a real, comprehensive prevention program and more investment in treatment. This directive is another step in our efforts to eliminate illegal drug use.

We know that reducing drug use will require everyone's effort. That's why today, our Drug Director, Dr. Lee Brown, is in California urging high school coaches to adopt drug testing of their athletes in order to reduce drug use among our teenagers.

These two actions send a clear and unambiguous message: Drug use and drug abuse are both wrong and illegal. We can't tolerate a revolving door of criminal drug abusers in our system. And if we work together, we can ensure that all the offenders in our country become drug-free and stay drug-free if they're going to stay out of jail.

Just yesterday, the FBI reported that for the first 6 months of this year, violent crime was down by 5 percent and the murder rate was down by 12 percent. Over the last 3 years, we've made ''three strikes and you're out'' the law of the land, passed the Brady bill, the assault weapons ban. We're well on our way to putting those 100,000 new police officers on the American streets. But there is still one very disturbing and unacceptable finding in the FBI report, the trend of violence being committed by juveniles.

Later this week, I will be sending the ''Enhanced Prosecution of Dangerous Juvenile Offenders Act'' to the Congress. This legislation will help to address the critical problem of youth criminals by strengthening Federal laws designed to deal with genuinely violent use. It's an additional tool for prosecutors to deal with violent juvenile criminals by holding dangerous youth criminals accountable for their actions. Once they've been arrested, we must stop them from repeating their crimes.

With these steps that we've announced today, Federal arrestees who are abusing drugs will no longer be out on the streets, and hardened criminals will be dealt with accordingly, even if they're juveniles.

[*At this point, the President signed the memorandum.*]

Drug Policy

Q. Do you think that's constitutional?

The President. The way it is drawn, I do. The Attorney General might want to explain it, but basically, in the places where this has been tried the people who are arrested are asked to undergo drug testing. As I understand it, about 80 percent of them agree. If they don't agree, instead of being forced it's just reported to the judge in making a determination about how high to set bail and what the conditions of bail should be.

Q. Well, if they are found to have taken drugs, does this mean they're not eligible for bail?

The President. Well, it means it can change the circumstances under which they're tried and what they might have to do as a condition.

Do you want to discuss that?

Attorney General Reno. What it is saying—it is clearly constitutional to condition bail on testing. And what this says is, if you are going to get bail, you may have to agree to testing, you may have to agree to continued testing, to supervision, to certain conduct while you're on bail. Or it may mean that you have got to remain in the jail because the conditions would not ensure that you would be drug-free once you were on the streets.

Q. Wouldn't you be subject to additional charges, though? You know, in other words, you're arrested on some totally unrelated charge, and you're found to have had drugs.

Attorney General Reno. What we're trying to do is to prevent the unrelated charge that happens once they've left the courthouse. And if they are using drugs and if drugs are what is fueling so much of crime in this country, to send them back out without doing something to interrupt that cycle and to let a crime happen that was drug-induced doesn't make any sense.

What the President is doing here is saying, look, we're going to try to do everything we can to ensure the safety of our streets based on these offenders and their condition, and we're also going to try to do something to make sure that we interrupt the cycle of drug use on the part of these offenders.

Budget Impasse

Q. Mr. President, what do you hear from the Speaker and Senator Dole on the budget and opening the Government again?

The President. Well, I had talks with both of them this afternoon, and I offered—first, I asked them to open the Government again, and to do it immediately, so that the people

who have made plans for Christmas week to be here and elsewhere would not be disappointed and so that the Federal employees would not be basically disoriented during this Christmas week. And I offered some ideas about how we might reopen the Government and how we might resume our budget negotiations. And they agreed to take my ideas under advisement and to speak with each other, perhaps with others as well.

So I don't think I should talk about specifically what I said to them until I hear back from them. I think that would be wrong. I owe it to them, to have a chance to consider this in a confidential matter on their own time.

Q. Did you invite them to come over here to sit down with you and try to resolve this?

The President. I talked about how we could get together and my personal willingness to be involved. But I'd rather not talk about the specifics of it until I hear back from them.

Q. Do you think they'll respond tonight?

The President. I just don't know. I hope so. I want the Congress to open the Government again. This is not—this whole action is without precedent. I think we should stop it, and we should go back to the ordinary way of dealing with this.

I have demonstrated, I think, repeatedly that I am committed to balancing the budget. I have shown that I will put forward a plan in 7 years. I have told them that I will work with them. And I will work with them, and I believe we can do it. But we ought to reopen the Government, the Congress should, for the benefit of the American people, especially this week. We shouldn't—this week the people and the employees should not be subject to this Government closing.

Q. Are you willing to have them over here as early as tonight, Mr. President?

The President. Well, I'd like to give them the chance to get back to me. I think it's important that I not talk anymore about the contents of my conversation until they have a chance to consider it and get back to me.

Q. Are you more encouraged, though, by what you heard in this phone call that the Government can get back to working 100 percent?

The President. I hope so. That's all I can say. I hope so.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:35 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Memorandum on Federal Arrestee Drug Testing

December 18, 1995

Memorandum for the Attorney General

Subject: Development of the Administration's Federal Arrestee Drug Testing Policy

Illegal drugs plague our communities, causing despair and illness, and, most importantly, contributing significantly to unacceptable levels of crime and violence. More than half of all individuals brought into the Nation's criminal justice system have substance abuse problems. Too often, the same criminal drug users cycle through the court, corrections, and probation systems still hooked on drugs and still committing crimes to support their habit.

We can and will continue to prosecute and convict these criminal drug users. Yet our criminal justice system must do more to try to reduce drug use. Across the country, employers have accepted their corporate responsibility to reduce the levels of drug use within their workplaces.

So too, the agencies of our criminal justice system must do their part, giving criminal drug users powerful incentives to stay off drugs by putting a high price on continued drug use. These incentives—commonly referred to as "coerced abstinence"—should be applied at the earliest possible stage in a person's interaction with the criminal justice system—following arrest.

To ensure that we are doing all we can to break the cycle of drugs and crime, I am directing you to develop a universal policy providing for drug testing of all Federal arrestees before decisions are made on whether to release them into the community pending trial. I further direct that you establish a policy whereby Federal prosecutors will seek appropriate measures for arrestees who fail pretrial drug tests.