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the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

William J. Clinton

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Remarks in Marrero, Louisiana

October 24, 1996

Thank you. Thanks. Thank you very much. Well, let me—I was listening to Yvonne McPherson talk, wondering if she was Reverend McPherson. [*Laughter*] And when she really got stirred up I thought, if this lady passes the plate we're all going to leave here broke. [*Laughter*]

Thank you. Thank you for your wonderful, wonderful words and your wonderful example. Thank you, Lieutenant Rénee Washington, for your 18 years and for the work you're doing to make our children safer and for your great remarks. I want to thank all of you for making all of us who don't live here feel so welcome tonight.

I understand the West Jefferson High School Band played. I thank them for that. I want to thank Congressman Cleo Fields for coming with me tonight and for all the work he's doing on our behalf. Thank you. My good friend Congressman Bill Jefferson, who plays both sides of the river here, and that's good politics. Sometimes it's not good in public life to straddle the fence, but I picked up pretty quick it's a good thing to straddle this river. [*Laughter*] If his in-laws hadn't been from here, I think he would have moved them over here just to make sure he was covered.

Thank you, my good friend Senator John Breaux, for all you do for Louisiana and all you've done for me. Thank you, and God bless you, sir. Thank you, Mary Landrieu, for running for the Senate and for standing up for what is right and supporting our crime program. Thank you. And Sheriff, thank you. I want to thank everybody in the sheriff's department who's worked on this program. I understand that Deputy Chief Gus Clavery has done a lot of work on it and others have. But this STAR program is an example of an issue that I think is very important.

When I ran for President, I found people all over America frustrated and angry by the crime problem but nearly resigned to it. There were no new ideas in many places, so people said, ''Just throw the book at them and leave me alone and I'll duck and dodge the bullets''—everywhere. But there were, thank goodness, a number of local leaders in law enforcement like Harry Lee—there isn't really nobody like Harry Lee, but you know what I mean. [*Laughter*] People that—I wasn't going to say this, but I'm going to say this. As you know, it's fairly well known throughout the country that I enjoy a meal now and then. [*Laughter*] And last time I came to New Orleans—I always love to come here, and I'm always angry if they make me leave without eating when I'm in here. So Harry took John Breaux and me to lunch, and I was finally with somebody I didn't have to be a bit embarrassed by enjoying my lunch with. I loved it. I loved it. And we had a good one, didn't we, Sheriff? [*Laughter*]

But the important thing—let me get back to this. Law enforcement leaders like Harry Lee who understood—and I found them all around America—that it wasn't only important to do things right, it was important to do the right things, which is very different. It was one thing for a person with a badge and a uniform on to look tough, be strong, and not do anything wrong and quite another thing for a person to always be searching out new ideas, ways to involve people in not only solving crime but preventing crimes in the first place.

You heard him say up here when he talked—he just picked up on something I mentioned at lunch about the way New York City had dramatically lowered the crime rate by radically increasing its ability to move law enforcement officers around every day among neighborhoods based on where the crime was moving. So I come—the next time I come to Louisiana, he tells me he's instituted the same thing. That's what we need, local leadership, citizens like Yvonne McPherson, dedicated officers like Rénee Washington, and law enforcement leaders like Harry Lee who want to do the right things as well as do things right.

And I was astonished when I ran for President the extent to which people on the one hand were screaming for something to be done about crime and on the other hand, absolutely believed nothing could be done about it. Deep down inside they had sort of given up, but they wanted us to make the right moves and make some right noises but they didn't really believe we could take our streets, our schools, our neighborhoods, and ultimately, our children back.

And I began to see things that changed my mind. I've told this story a lot of times, but I made a good friend one night early in 1992 when I was dropping in the polls in New Hampshire and people were writing my obituary. I went to New York City to a fundraiser, and frankly, I was a pretty sad case. I was feeling sorry for myself. And I was walking through the kitchen to get around like we sometimes do, to get around to where I was going to give the speech.

And a Greek immigrant with a waiter's uniform stopped me. And he said, ''Now, Mr. President, my son is 10. He's in the fifth grade; he studies this election. He says I should vote for you, so I think I will vote for you, if you will do one thing for me.'' I said, ''What do you want?'' He said, ''I want to make my boy free.'' And I said, ''Well, sir,'' I said, ''Mr. Theofanis, this is a democracy.'' He said, ''Yes it is, but my boy is not free.'' He said, ''Where I lived before, I was poor, much poorer than I am here in New York. But at least we were free. Here, across the street from our apartment in New York, there is this beautiful park. I can't let my child go to the park unless I go with him. I'm lucky I live only 2 blocks from the school and it's actually quite a good school, but my boy can't walk down the street to the school unless I go with him. So I'll vote for you, but you have to make my boy free.''

And I heard stories like this all over America. But I also saw neighborhoods in Los Angeles where the police had cut the response time down to 2 minutes. I saw streets in Philadelphia that had been infested by gangs and drugs, where neighborhood groups had worked with the police to take their streets back. And just a little bit, here and there I would see these glimmers of hope, and I promised myself that if I got elected President, I was going to take the politics out of crime and try to put the police and the people back into the business of lowering the crime rate and bringing safety back to America and restoring fundamental freedom.

Now, the crime bill that you've heard everybody brag on—I appreciate that, all the credit they're trying to give me. All I did was take the politics out of crime. All we did was to let law enforcement people and community activists, like the folks that have spoken tonight, tell us what the Federal Government ought to do to be a good partner to help communities take their streets back and give their kids a future back. That is all we did.

But as it turned out, that was quite a lot, because for 6 years, the debate in Washington had been a bunch of rhetoric and who could talk the toughest and who could do the least because they we didn't want anything to make any of the organized groups mad. And the problem was, nothing ever got done. So all we did was to let law enforcement officials, in effect, tell us what ought to be done, let community activists tell us what ought to be done; that's what the '94 crime bill was about.

It's been a remarkable 4 years in the area of fighting crime. In this crime bill, we agreed that over a 5-year period, we'd fund 100,000 police. After only 2 years, we've funded almost half of them, so we're ahead of schedule and under budget. As the sheriff said, there were no strings in this bill except one. There was just one string—the money had to be spent to hire law enforcement officers who would go on the street, not behind a desk. That was the only string. We said, ''You figure out who to hire; you figure out how to train them; you decide how to deploy them; you decide how you're going to relate to the community. It's all your decision. We don't know in Washington how to do that.''

But we do know that in 30 years the violent crime rate has tripled and the police forces have only gone up by 10 percent in this country. There's no way you could do it. We had place after place after place that were more violent without any more police officers and they were covering less because they had to go around two at a time and then they had to get in the car, so nobody was on the street. And we were losing the battle because we

weren't doing the right things. So that's all we tried to do.

We also passed a "three strikes and you're out" law for people who are prosecuted in Federal court for serious crimes. They do it a third time, they're not eligible for parole, not ever—and life imprisonment. We passed the capital punishment for drug kingpins and people who kill our law enforcement officers in the line of duty. We passed a strong safe and drug-free schools program to give our little children something to say yes to, to put more of those D.A.R.E. officers and other people out there in the classrooms when the kids were in grade school, saying drugs are wrong, drugs are illegal, drugs can kill you.

We also—we're giving schools more funds to stay open later. I've fought to maintain the summer jobs program, I've fought to try to give our young people something to say yes to. I'm now trying to make sure we open the doors of college education to everybody, so no young person has to worry about whether they'll be able to afford to go to college if they stay in school and stay off drugs and stay out of trouble and make their grades. I think that's important. That's important.

We've also tried to support more people, like Yvonne, in citizens groups. Over the next 4 years, we're going to try to mobilize another million volunteers to work with the police to get the crime rate down. San Diego, California, has the lowest crime rate of any of the 10 big cities in America, even though it's right on the border where we're constantly fighting illegal immigration and people trying to bring drugs across the border. They still have—in any of the 10 biggest cities, they've got the lowest crime rate.

Why? One reason is, they have hundreds and hundreds of retired people who work in these citizens groups with the police not only to catch criminals, but to keep crime from happening in the first place, watching out for the little kids on the street, watching out for their neighbors. They know whenever somebody's gone on vacation, they watch their homes and they work together.

So this is something we've got to do together. There's more to be done. We have to continue to support these police officers. You know, Harry Lee and I were laughing—I once had a lifetime membership in the NRA; I think it's been revoked now because I stood up for the Brady bill. But we didn't take any guns away from hunters or sportsmen, not a single one. We haven't done that. But at least 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers couldn't get guns. Now if you beat up your wife or your kids, you can't get a handgun under the new law. It's a good thing. It's a good thing. [*Applause*] I would oppose any effort to undermine my ability to duck hunt—[*laughter*]—or anybody's ability to be a championship skeet shooter or to do anything else that's appropriate and legal. But I still think we ought to ban those bullets that are build only for one purpose, to pierce the bullet-proof vests that our police officers wear. I don't see why we need those things out there.

Let me tell you, we just started this program 2 years ago, as I said, when I signed the crime bill in 1994. Today I met with the first—the family of the first one of the police officers hired under our crime bill, killed in the line of duty. I met here in Louisiana, in Lake Charles—I met with that officer's widow and two beautiful, beautiful young sons. And I thought to myself, you know, if people like these folks here are going to put their lives on the line for us, the least we can do is tell them if they put on a bullet-proof vest, it will protect them from being killed. That's the least we can do for them.

And so what I want you to believe is, number one, this is not an accident, what Harry Lee said about reducing the violent crime rate and the crime rate by 85 percent. That is not an accident. That happened because people did the right things. The second thing I want you to believe is the Federal Government, your President, and the Congress; we can make a difference, and we are. But we're not doing it because of our political connections or philosophy. We're doing it because we took the politics out of crime. The third thing I want you to know is this could all be reversed. In the budget I vetoed last year, that the majority in Congress passed—they eliminated the 100,000 police program. Again, I had to stop them from trying to cut back on it. For reasons I do not understand, they do not believe in it. They tried to cut the safe and drug-free schools program in

half. Drug use is going down in America, folks, big time. But drug use among children under 18 is still going up. The last thing we need to do is to cut back on safe and drug-free schools effort. We need more adults in those schools talking to those kids.

And my newest proposal, which is probably going to get me in trouble with some of the young people in America, but I want to say, look, 90 percent of our kids are drug-free and we need to support them and we need to lift up the good kids and we need to give them something to say yes to. I want to say that again. We need to say it. But I'm going to ask those 90 percent to do something that may be unpopular with them. I'm going to ask them to go along with my proposal to get every State in the country to make a drug test part of getting a driver's license so we can find the other 10 percent and save their lives and help them and give them a chance for the future.

I say again, you deserve most of the credit here, the sheriff, Lieutenant Washington, Yvonne McPherson, all of you that work in this, these police officers. You deserve the credit. But we have to do our part. And we have tried to do our part. And I want you to sustain this effort by what you say on November 5th. And I know what Mary Landrieu will say; she'll stay with us. She'll support us. And that's important.

So I want you to help by sending people to Washington who will continue to take crime fighting out of politics and give it back to the people of every neighborhood in America. That's important, and Mary will do that. That's important. And I want you to continue to support these efforts here. But just remember this; if you don't remember anything else remember this: This is an example of what we can do when we stop talking and start acting and when we reach across the lines that divide us and join hands and agree on things that we all agree on. We do not have to put up with unacceptable rates of crime and violence. We do not have to put up with what I have seen in America.

We're almost to Halloween now. Just a couple of years ago in Baltimore—where the mayor has labored mightily on this—there was this wonderful young man, 17 years old, his whole life before him, took two little kids out trick-or-treating so they would be safe. And somebody shot him from across the street and ended his life just for kicks. Last year in Washington, in a suburb, a 13-year-old honor student standing innocently at a school bus stop—a city bus stop, shot down just because he happened to be standing in the wrong place in a drive-by shooting. You don't have to put up with that. You don't have to give up your children to that. You don't have to do that. We can make a difference.

We are making a difference, and you're making a difference here. And I will do my best for 4 more years to make sure we have 4 more years of declining crime here in Jefferson Parish.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:33 p.m. at the Marrero Action Playground. In his remarks, he referred to Yvonne McPherson, who introduced the President. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks in Atlanta, Georgia

October 25, 1996

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much. Hello, Atlanta. Are you feeling good? You made the sun come out.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be in Atlanta and in Georgia. I thank all of you for being here, but I want to say a special word of thanks to those who have helped this be a great youth day for our campaign all across America. We're talking to young Americans about their future.

So let's give this great band Cracker another hand. Didn't they do a good job? [*Applause*] And I thank my long-time supporter Michael Stipe from R.E.M. for coming here. Thank you, Michael. Thank you, Kathleen Bertrand, for singing the National Anthem so beautifully. And thank you, Becky Ahmann, for giving us an example of the future we are trying to build in your own life. She gave a good speech, didn't she? She's out doing this for a living.

I thank all the distinguished Georgians who are here, but one especially. Thank you, Coretta Scott King, for coming today to be with us. Thank you. Mayor Campbell, thank