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tain family obligations. It could allow a worker to attend a parent-teacher conference or to take a child to the pediatrician or to find quality child care or to care for an elderly relative.

Families occasionally need these small pieces of time to take care of their own. More than 12 million American workers have taken leave for reasons covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act since it became the very first bill I signed into law in 1993. It was needed then, it's needed now, and we need to improve on it. So I urge Congress to act soon on this legislation. Don't ask people to choose, ever, between being good workers and good parents. We can help them to do both. Pass the expanded family and medical leave act.

I believe this bill is so important that today I am asking all Federal departments and agencies to make expanded family and medical leave available to their workers immediately. Wherever possible, I want workers to have access right now to essential time off for family obligations.

I am committed to doing all we can to support families as they struggle to do right by their children. We know that the very earliest years will decide whether children grow up to become healthy and happy people. That's why we're giving parents time off to care for them, why we should extend the family leave law so millions more parents can have that opportunity, and why we must focus all our science, education, and public efforts to give our children the very best start in life.

Almost a century and a half ago, Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "A child's education should begin at least a hundred years before he was born." What we do now can benefit generations of Americans to come. We can start with the smallest community, the family. And from there we can rebuild and renew the best in America by beginning with the best of America, our children.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE. The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on the Decline in Violent Crime Statistics

April 11, 1997

Today the Department of Justice reported that violent crime dropped 12.4 percent in 1995.

Four years ago, we made a commitment to take our streets back from crime and violence. We had a comprehensive plan: to put 100,000 new community police officers on the street and tough new penalties on the books; to steer young people away from crime, gangs, and drugs; and to keep guns out of the hands of criminals with the assault weapons ban and the Brady bill.

Today we learned that the first full year of our crime bill produced the largest drop in violent crime in 22 years. Earlier this year, we learned that the Brady bill has already stopped 186,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers from purchasing handguns.

Our plan is working. Now we must press forward. Fighting the scourge of juvenile crime and violence is my top law enforcement priority for the next 4 years. In February, I submitted my Anti-Gang and Youth Violence Strategy to Congress. This bill declares war on gangs, with new prosecutors and tougher penalties; extends the Brady bill so violent teenage criminals will never have the right to purchase a handgun; and provides resources to keep schools open late, on weekends, and in the summer, so young people have something to say yes to.

I am hopeful that Congress will pass it without delay. We must keep the crime rate coming down and every child's prospect of a bright future going up.

NOTE: This statement was embargoed for release until 4:30 p.m. on April 13.

Remarks on the Apparel Industry Partnership

April 14, 1997

Thank you very much. I would like to begin, first of all, by thanking all the members of this partnership, the cochairs, Paul Charron of Liz Claiborne and Linda

Golodner of the National Consumers League, Jay Mazur of UNITE. I thank Kathie Lee Gifford, who has done so much to bring public attention to this issue. I thank the Members of Congress who are here: Congressman George Miller, Congressman Bernie Sanders, Congressman Lane Evans, Congressman Marty Martinez, and especially I thank my good friend Senator Tom Harkin, who first brought this issue to my attention a long time ago. Thank you very much, sir, and thank all of you for your passionate concern. I thank the former Secretary of Labor, Bob Reich, and Acting Secretary Cynthia Metzler and Secretary-designate Alexis Herman, who is here. And I thank Marie Echaveste and Gene Sperling for their work.

The announcement we make today will improve the lives of millions of garment workers around the world. As has now been painfully well documented, some of the clothes and shoes we buy here in America are manufactured under working conditions which are deplorable and unacceptable—mostly overseas, but unbelievably, sometimes here at home as well.

In our system of enterprise, which I have done my best to promote and advance, we support the proposition that businesses are in business to make a profit. But in our society, which we believe to be good and want to be better, we know that human rights and labor rights must be a part of the basic framework within which all businesses honorably compete.

As important as the fabric apparel workers make for us is the fabric of their lives, which is a part of the fabric of our lives, here at home and around the world. Their health and their safety, their ability to make a decent wage, their ability to bring children into this world and raise them with dignity and have their children see their parents working with dignity, that's an important part of the quality of our lives and will have a lot to do with the quality of our children's future.

Last August, when the Vice President and I brought together the leaders of some of our Nation's largest apparel and footwear companies and representatives of labor, consumer, human rights, and religious groups, I was genuinely moved at the shared outrage at sweatshop abuses and the shared determination to do something about it. That led to this apparel industry partnership. This partnership has reached an agreement—as already has been said—that will significantly reduce the use of sweatshop labor over the long run. It will give American consumers greater confidence in the products they buy.

And again, I say they have done a remarkable thing. Paul Charron said it was just the beginning because even though there are some very impressive and big companies represented on this stage, there are some which are not. But I would like to ask all the members of the partnership here to stand, and I think we ought to express our appreciation to them for what they have done. [*Applause*]

Now, here's what they agreed to do: first, a workplace code of conduct that companies will voluntarily adopt, and require their contractors to adopt, to dramatically improve the conditions under which goods are made. The code will establish a maximum workweek, a cap of 12 hours on the amount of overtime a company can require, require that employers pay at least the minimum or prevailing wage, respect basic labor rights. It will require safe and healthy working conditions and freedom from abuse and harassment. Most important, it will crack down on child labor, prohibiting the employment of those under 15 years of age in most countries.

It will also take steps to ensure that this code is enforced and that American consumers will know that the tenets of the agreement are being honored. The apparel industry has developed new standards for internal and external monitoring to make sure companies and contractors live up to that code of conduct. It will also form an independent association to help implement the agreement and to develop an effective way to share this information with consumers, such as labels on clothing, seals of approval in advertising, or signs in stores to guarantee that no sweatshop labor was used on a given product line.

Of course, the agreement is just the beginning. We know sweatshop labor will not vanish overnight. We know that while this agreement is an historic step, our real measure of progress must be in the changed and improved lives and livelihoods of apparel workers here at home and around the world. That

is why we need more companies to join this crusade and follow its strict rules of conduct.

One of the association's most important tasks will be to expand participation to as many large and small companies as possible. And I urge all of America's apparel companies to become part of this effort. If these people are willing to put their names, their necks, their reputations, and their bottom lines on the bottom line of America, every other company in America in their line of work ought to be willing to do the very same thing.

We have spent a lot of time trying to find jobs for everybody in America who wants to work, and we have spent a lot of time saying that people who are able-bodied, who can work, should be required to work. Now, we are also reminding ourselves that no one, anywhere, should have to put their safety or their dignity on the line to support themselves or their children. This is a great day for America, a great day for the cause of human rights, and I believe a great day for free enterprise. And I thank all of those who are here who made it possible.

I'm proud that this agreement was industry-led and wholly voluntary. Like the TV industry's decision to rate its programming, like the new private sector effort to help move people from welfare to work, like the high-tech industry's efforts to wire our schools and our classrooms to the Internet, all of them, by the year 2000—which we will continue this Saturday—this is further evidence that we can solve our problems by working together in new and creative ways.

The apparel industry understands that we all share a stake in preparing our country for the 21st century and preparing the world to be a good partner. Reaching across lines that have too often divided us in the past, this new partnership will create more opportunity for working families. It will demand more responsibility for working conditions. It will build a stronger community here in America and bind us to the community of people all around the world who believe in the value of work but who also believe in the importance of its dignity and sanctity.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainer Kathie Lee Gifford and the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE).

Proclamation 6988—To Modify Application of Duty-Free Treatment Under the Generalized System of Preferences

April 11, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

1. Sections 502(d)(1) and 503(c)(1) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended by Public Law 104–188; 110 Stat. 1755, 1920, 1922 ("the 1974 Act") (19 U.S.C. 2462(d)(1) and 2463(c)(1)), provide that the President may withdraw, suspend, or limit the application of the duty-free treatment accorded under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) with respect to any country and any article upon consideration of the factors set forth in sections 501 and 502(c) of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2461 and 2462(c)). Pursuant to sections 502(d)(1) and 503(c)(1) of the 1974 Act and having considered the factors set forth in sections 501 and 502(c) of such Act, including, in particular, section 502(c)(5) (19 U.S.C. 2464(c)(5)) on the extent to which a designated beneficiary developing country is providing adequate and effective protection of intellectual property rights, I have determined that it is appropriate to suspend the duty-free treatment accorded under the GSP to certain eligible articles that are the product of Argentina, as provided in the Annex to this proclamation.

2. Section 604 of the 1974 Act, as amended (19 U.S.C. 2483), authorizes the President to embody in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTS) the substance of the relevant provisions of that Act, and of other acts affecting import treatment, and actions thereunder, including the removal, modification, continuance, or imposition of any rate of duty or other import restriction.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, acting under the authority vested in me by