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Week Ending Friday, April 17, 1998

The President's Radio Address

April 11, 1998

Good morning. Across America and around the world, this is a holy weekend for three of the world's great religions. Christians are celebrating Easter; Jews, Passover; and Muslims have just ended their annual pilgrimage, the hajj.

On this special weekend, the eyes of the world and the prayers of so many are focused on Northern Ireland, as an historic peace agreement was reached among representatives of all the major parties to that long and tragic conflict.

I especially want to salute the leadership of Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland, Prime Minister Tony Blair of Great Britain, and the leaders of all the parties who came together in a remarkable display of courage to set aside differences in the pursuit of peace. I also salute the previous Prime Ministers of Ireland and Great Britain, who started and nourished this peace process.

And all Americans should take a special measure of pride that the talks in Northern Ireland were chaired by George Mitchell, the former majority leader of the United States Senate, who has served his country and the cause of peace very, very well. I thank him for his brilliant leadership.

Of course, we understand that the pain and hatred of so many years cannot and will not be washed away in one weekend. So on behalf of the American people, I pledge the continuing aid, support, encouragement, and prayers of the United States to the effort to build a lasting peace and an enduring prosperity in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

In the last analysis, the future of that region lies in the hearts and hands of its people. Like so many Americans, part of my family calls Ireland home. And having been there, having met with so many remarkable Irish men and women, from all sides of the conflict, I have seen the future in their eyes—a future in which children can grow up free from fear; a future rich with the lilt of Irish laughter, not the pain of bitter tears.

There may be those who seek to undermine this agreement by returning to violence, so we are resolved that the acts of peace and courage will triumph over acts of cowardice and terror.

Tomorrow, the dawn will break on Easter morning. All across Ireland, Catholics and Protestants will, in their own way, proclaim their faith in the triumph of life over death. On this Easter, their leaders have lifted their Christian beliefs and have lived them by giving the people of Ireland and Northern Ireland the chance to choose peace over conflict, indeed, to choose life over death.

When I visited Ulster, and later the Republic of Ireland, the great Nobel Prize-winning Irish poet, Seamus Heaney, gave me a stanza from a poem he wrote that today hangs on the wall of my office in the upstairs of the White House. Its message has a special meaning today. Here's what it says: ''History says, 'Don't hope on this side of the grave.' But then, once in a lifetime, the longed-for tidal wave of justice can rise up, and hope and history rhyme.'' What a wonderful Easter gift for the Irish, Irish-Americans, and lovers of peace everywhere.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:30 p.m. on April 10 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 11.

Statement on School Crime

April 12, 1998

Today the Attorney General and Secretary of Education forwarded to me an important, but troubling, study on school crime. Although the study shows that the overall crime rate in our schools did not change significantly between 1989 and 1995, it confirms that some schools have serious problems.