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Proclamation 7084—National Crime Victims' Rights Week, 1998

April 20, 1998

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Every day, thousands of Americans become victims of crime. Many suffer physical injury, and most experience emotional scars that may never fully heal. And all victims of crime, and their families and friends, often remain troubled by feelings of vulnerability and concerned about their personal safety.

Five years ago, my Administration made a commitment to take back our streets from criminals and to combat the crime and violence that affects so many Americans. With the Crime Act, the Brady Act, the Violence Against Women Act, and other tough legislation, we have put into action a comprehensive anticrime strategy that includes community policing, antigang programs, and strong penalties for criminals.

Our strategy is working. Crime rates across the country are at a 25-year low. Violent crimes and property crimes have decreased, and the murder rate is down dramatically. While we can take pride in this progress, we cannot afford to become complacent. We must build on the anticrime programs we have put into place if we are to win the war against crime.

As part of our continuing efforts, this year the Department of Justice is awarding more than $135 million in grants under the Violence Against Women program to help State and local authorities reduce domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault. These funds will enable communities to train more police, hire prosecutors, and provide assistance to the victims of such crimes. Earlier this month, after thorough study, the Secretary of the Treasury concluded that we should ban more than 50 kinds of modified assault weapons because they accept large-capacity military magazines. By keeping these weapons off our streets and out of the hands of criminals, we will take another crucial step toward halting the scourge of gun violence that has taken such a tragic toll on America's children and families.

During National Crime Victims' Rights Week, we call to mind those whose lives have been so abruptly and often violently changed. This annual observance is also a powerful reminder of the extraordinary capacity of our citizens to face adversity and overcome it. Across America, victims of crime have refused to become victims of a criminal justice system that too often ignores or compromises their rights while protecting the rights of criminals.

With courage and determination, crime victims and their dedicated advocates have succeeded in winning constitutional amendments in 29 States that guarantee such fundamental rights as protection from further harm, which includes keeping victims and accused criminals in separate rooms during court proceedings; the right of victims to call upon law enforcement if they feel they are being harassed or intimidated in connection with a pending case; and the right to be notified of a convicted criminal's release from incarceration. And after decades of advocacy, a proposed Federal constitutional amendment for victims now lies before the Congress. We have the opportunity—and the responsibility—to amend the United States Constitution to ensure that the rights of victims are honored in every court throughout our Nation.

This year, our observance of National Crime Victims' Rights Week coincides with the anniversary of the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. That tragedy brought home to an entire Nation the extraordinary suffering and grief that can be rendered by a single, senseless, criminal act. In remembering the many victims of this brutal crime, let us pledge to sustain our efforts to reduce violent crime, to provide comfort and support to its

victims as they strive to rebuild their lives, and to keep victims' rights a primary concern in America's criminal justice system.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 19 through April 25, 1998, as National Crime Victims' Rights Week. I urge all Americans to remember crime victims and their families by working to reduce violence, to assist those harmed by crime, and to make our homes and communities safer places in which to live and raise our families.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:13 a.m., April 21, 1998]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 22.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the "Education Savings Act for Public and Private Schools"

April 20, 1998

Dear Mr. Leader:

As you consider H.R. 2646 this week, you will have the opportunity to vote for the first time on a version of my proposal to help build and modernize more than 5,000 schools across America. I am writing to ask for your support in this important effort and for your opposition to the expanded Education IRAs in the bill.

Never before have the education infrastructure needs of the Nation been so great. In order to accommodate record enrollments, move to smaller class sizes, repair aging buildings, take advantage of new technologies, and better educate children with disabilities, States and localities are faced with unprecedented construction and renovation needs. The Federal Government helps build roads, bridges, and other infrastructure projects, but none of that will matter much if we let the education infrastructure come crumbling down on our children. We must be part of the solution.

I understand that Senator Moseley-Braun will offer an amendment that would replace the IRA provisions with a proposal to allow communities to issue nearly $22 billion in bonds for modernizing public schools. Because bond purchasers would receive interest payments through a Federal tax credit, communities' costs would be reduced by one-third or more. A vote for the amendment is a vote for safer, state-of-the-art schools that will open doors to the future for our children.

The IRA provisions, which provide tax benefits for elementary and secondary education expenses, are both bad education policy and bad tax policy. Instead of targeting limited Federal resources to build stronger public schools, this proposal would divert needed resources from public schools. In addition, the expanded IRAs provide little financial assistance to average families, disproportionately benefiting the highest-income taxpayers. For these reasons, and because of other potential amendments that may be adopted, I would veto this bill.

Our children deserve schools they can be proud of. I urge you to help our schools provide a learning environment that will prepare our children for the challenges of tomorrow by supporting the Moseley-Braun amendment, and opposing the expanded Education IRAs.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Trent Lott, majority leader, and Thomas A. Daschle, minority leader, United States Senate. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.