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Now the Berlin Wall is down. The barriers of communism have fallen. But all over the world today, there are places where people are building walls in their hearts because they feel that they only count if they can look down on somebody who is different from them. And those walls are every bit as powerful as the Berlin Wall was, and in a profound way, harder to tear down.

America must both do good and be good on this issue of community and our common humanity. It is our great challenge and perhaps the most compelling reason that the Democratic Party should be America's majority party in the 21st century.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Alan D. Solomont, former national finance chair, Democratic National Committee, and his wife, Susan. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

April 17, 1999

Good morning. Of all the duties we owe to one another, our duty to our parents and grandparents is among the most sacred. Today I want to talk about what we must do to strengthen the safety net for America's seniors, by cracking down on elder crime, fraud, and abuse.

For more than 6 years, we've worked hard to keep our families and our communities safe. And we've made remarkable progress, with violent crime dropping to its lowest levels in 25 years. For elderly Americans who once locked themselves into their homes in fear, the falling crime rate is a godsend.

But the greatest threat many older Americans face is not a criminal armed with a gun but a telemarketer armed with a deceptive rap. And our most defenseless seniors, those who are sick or disabled and living in nursing homes, cannot lock the door against abuse and neglect by people paid to care for them. So America's seniors are especially vulnerable to fraud and abuse. Therefore, we must make special efforts to protect them.

That is why the 21st century crime bill I'll send to Congress next month includes tough measures to target people who prey on elderly Americans. First, we must fight telemarketing fraud that robs people of their life savings and endangers their well-being. Every single year illegal telemarketing operations bilk the American people of an estimated $40 billion. More than half the victims are over 50. That's like a fraud tax aimed directly at senior citizens.

Last year we toughened penalties for telemarketing fraud, but we should stop scam artists before they have a chance to harm America's seniors. My crime bill will give the Justice Department authority to terminate telephone service when agents find evidence of an illegal telemarketing operation or a plan to start one. This new law will send a message to telemarketers: If you prey on older Americans, we will cut off your phone lines and shut you down.

Second, we must fight nursing home neglect and abuse. Nursing homes can be a safe haven for senior citizens and families in need. To make sure they are, we've issued the toughest nursing home rules in history and stepped up investigations at facilities suspected of neglect and abuse. But when one out of four nursing homes in America does not provide quality care to their residents, and when people living in substandard nursing homes have as much fear from abuse and neglect as they do from the diseases of old age, we must do more.

My crime bill gives the Justice Department authority to investigate, prosecute, and punish nursing home operators who repeatedly neglect and abuse their residents. With prison sentences of up to 10 years and fines of up to $2 million, these new provisions make clear we will settle for nothing less than the highest quality care in America's nursing homes.

Third, we must fight health care fraud. Every year health care fraud costs American taxpayers billions of dollars, draining resources from programs that benefit our seniors. As Vice President Gore announced last month, my crime bill will allow the Justice Department to take immediate action to stop false claims and illegal kickbacks and give

Federal prosecutors new tools to tackle fraud cases.

Finally, we must fight retirement plan rip-offs. My crime bill will toughen penalties for people who steal from pension and retirement funds. To borrow a line from Senator Leahy, who is working closely with us to strengthen the safety net for our seniors, the only people who should benefit from pensions are the people who worked for a lifetime to build them.

I look forward to working with Congress in the coming days to give our senior citizens the security they deserve. That is an important part of our efforts to protect our parents and our grandparents, to advance our values, and build a stronger America for the 21st century.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:45 p.m. on April 16 in the Roseville Recreation Center in Roseville, MI, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 17. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 16 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Message to the Citizens of Oklahoma City on the Fourth Anniversary of the Bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building

April 14, 1999

Greetings to everyone gathered in Oklahoma City to remember those who died in the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

The bombing on April 19, 1995, stole the lives of 168 people and brought grief to the victim's families and to our entire nation. This cowardly act of terrorism outraged not only the people of the United States, but also civilized men and women everywhere.

As you gather to mark the fourth anniversary of that tragedy, I know that your memories of the loved ones you lost are undiminished by the passing of time. I know, too, that all Americans still share your sorrow.

Four years ago, you were brought together by your devastating loss. In the years since, you have reached out to forge new ties of community, turning your shared sadness into a source of strength for all Americans. As you prepare to dedicate the national memorial at next year's observance, I commend you for your courage and your dedication in creating a lasting tribute to the memory of your loved ones.

Hillary and I are keeping all of you in our thoughts and prayers.

Bill Clinton

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 19.

Remarks at the Award Ceremony for the National Teacher of the Year

April 19, 1999

Thank you very much. Thank you, Terry. I also want to acknowledge and welcome Congresswoman Patsy Mink from Hawaii, who is here with her husband, John. We're very delighted to see them. I'd like to thank the Chief State School Officers for sponsoring this award, along with Scholastic—and I believe Gordon Ambach and Ernie Fleishman are both here.

Terry said I'd given 131 speeches on education. I didn't know that until I just came in here. [*Laughter*] I wasn't keeping count. It is true that a few years ago I started reeling off all my teachers, beginning at kindergarten. And when I started running for office a long time ago now, I remember I asked—the fellow who was helping me put my first campaign together said, "People don't know much about you; we've got to do a little biographical film, and we ought to put one of your teachers in it." And I said, "Well, I still carry on a correspondence with my sixth grade teacher, Kathleen Scher." I did until she died at about 91 years of age. And I used to see her about once a year.

"But you can't use her," I said. And they said, "Well, why? That sounds like a wonderful story." I said, "It is, but she's liable to tell you what she told me the day I finished my elementary school career." [*Laughter*] True story. My sainted sixth grade teacher, who is one of these wonderful—she lived with her first cousin, and they lived until their late eighties or early nineties, and they taught school for a gazillion years. And she