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The greatness of this country has always been the promise of opportunity for everyone who is willing to work for it. Today you not only have to be willing to work for it, you have to know enough to achieve it. Therefore, there is no important responsibility that should have greater weight on our minds as Americans, without regard to party and without regard to whether we work in the National Government or the State and local government or the smallest rural school or the biggest inner-city school or whether we're just taxpaying citizens, with or without children in those schools—there is nothing more important for us to be focused on today than making sure that very early in the next century we can look at each other, straight in the eye, and say—and believe and be right about saying—that it is possible in America, in every community, to get a world-class education.

Thank you very much.

Now, I'd like to ask the Members of Congress to come on up, and we'll sign the bill. Come on.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:04 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Dr. Iris T. Metts, secretary of education and Gov. Thomas R. Carper of Delaware. H.R. 800, approved April 29, was assigned Public Law No. 106–25.

Statement on the Report of the Working Group on Financial Markets

April 29, 1999

As part of our ongoing efforts to increase opportunities and reduce risks in the global economy, we have focused on ways to strengthen the world's financial system. Today I welcome the Working Group on Financial Markets' report entitled ''Hedge Funds, Leverage, and the Lessons of Long-Term Capital Management.''

The report contains a number of policy recommendations that are designed to reduce the potential risks of excessive leverage, as demonstrated by the near-collapse of long-term capital management. By enhancing transparency in the financial system, by increasing the amount of information made available to the public, and by improving risk management on the part of financial institutions, we can help reduce these risks. Taken together, the report's recommendations are an important step in our efforts to promote more secure financial markets. This report is the result of a collective effort by all of the Federal financial regulatory agencies. I want to commend the Working Group for this thoughtful report. I look forward to working with Congress on these important issues.

Statement on Legislation To Waive the Federal Government's Claim to Tobacco Settlement Funds

April 29, 1999

I am disappointed that so few States are devoting tobacco settlement funds to reducing youth smoking, as shown by the new report from the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids and the American Heart Association. This new report underscores why I strongly oppose any legislation waiving the Federal Government's claim to tobacco settlement funds without a commitment from the States to fund youth tobacco prevention efforts. In the absence of such a commitment, States won't have to spend a single penny of the $246 billion tobacco settlement to reduce youth smoking. We must act now: every day, 3,000 children become regular smokers and 1,000 will have their lives cut short as a result.

Interview With Katie Couric of the National Broadcasting Corporation

April 29, 1999

Gun Control Legislation

Ms. Couric. Mr. President, first of all, thank you very, very much for talking with us this afternoon. We really appreciate it.

Senator Trent Lott called your proposed gun control legislation the typical knee-jerk reaction, and Congressman Tom Delay accused you of exploiting the issue for political benefit. You would say to them?

The President. That's ridiculous, and down deep they know it. I think—you know, what I tried to say the other day is that we

have a culture with too much violence in it for our children, and we need to address that, television, the Internet, the whole range of things. But we also have a culture in America full of good people who are devoted to hunting and sport shooting, whose political views on these issues, I think, have been manipulated to create a movement that has terrified a lot of Members of Congress from taking the most elemental precautions to keep criminals and keep children from having guns that they shouldn't have, that any other society in the world would take.

Ms. Couric. Good people——

The President. And that's why we have—well, what I mean is, most of the people that are involved in serious hunting and sport shooting, they're law-abiding; they pay their taxes; they do what they're asked to do for the country; they're fine people. But they have been convinced that the most modest, sensible ways of keeping society safer are some kind of camel's nose in a tent that will end up in the loss of their rifles, and that's ridiculous.

You know, the Brady bill has kept over a quarter of a million felons, fugitives, and stalkers from getting guns. Who knows how many people it saved. But we've got loopholes in the Brady bill. We've got loopholes in the assault weapons ban. We've got loopholes in the restrictions on these bit ammunition clips. We don't apply background checks at gun shows, which we ought to. We don't apply background checks to the purchase of explosives, which we ought to. These are sensible measures that will keep people alive.

Ms. Couric. Who are these people being manipulated by? The National Rifle Association?

The President. The National Rifle Association and some of these other groups as well.

Ms. Couric. The NRA, by the way, Mr. President, is getting ready to meet in Denver. If you could have a cup of coffee with Charlton Heston before that meeting gets underway, what would you say to him?

The President. I would say it's—you ought to be Moses and lead your people out of Egypt into the Promised Land. You ought to think about how we can protect the rights of hunters and use the good things the NRA's done to educate children, young people on gun safety, for example, and stop wasting your energy when we try to say that a juvenile that commits a violent crime shouldn't have a gun. Stop wasting your energy when we try to reinstitute the waiting period for the Brady bill or close the assault weapons loopholes or close the loopholes in the Brady bill—or, say that we ought to have a background check for explosives or a background check at these gun shows. That's what we ought to do.

This is designed to keep people alive, for goodness sakes. This has nothing to do with the right to hunt or to engage in sporting contests.

Ms. Couric. Mr. President, do you believe any elements of your gun control package might have prevented the tragedy in Littleton?

The President. Well, we have to have all the facts. We know that they were involved with explosives. We know they had an assault pistol. We also—one of the things we didn't talk about is that I want to strengthen the tracking—weapons tracking capacity of the Government when weapons pass through multiple hands. There may have been a gun show sale involved here. Depending on who bought it, we don't know what the background check would have occurred.

What we do know is that if all these proposals were in place, they would save more lives more places. Just the Brady bill alone has kept a quarter of a million people from getting guns who had questionable backgrounds. There's no doubt in my mind that a lot of lives were saved. The assaults weapons ban is a good thing, but there are too many loopholes in it, and we want to close them. This just makes sense.

Parents' Responsibilities

Ms. Couric. President Clinton, you've admitted that access to guns is just part of the problem. Another part is parenting in this country, or lack thereof. What are parents doing wrong?

The President. Let me tell you a story, because I don't think it's so much as what they're doing as maybe as what they're not doing. A Member of the Congress, who is a friend of mine, and I had a conversation

the other night, and he had just been with a high school, and he asked the students at the high school—this was a few days after Littleton—how many of them had talked to their parents about this. And he said only a small minority raised their hands. And one young woman stood up and said, "I had to stand in front of the television and tell my parents we were going to not watch any more television until we talked about this, because I think they were afraid. They didn't want to deal with the fact that this could happen in other places in America."

I think that what we have to do is to, first of all, tell parents they have to assume responsibility for their children's television and video games and all that. They have to assume their family responsibility for that. But they also have to know, insofar as they possibly can, what's going on in their children's lives and minds, and we have to work with them to help them develop the skills necessary to determine if their kids need help and then get the help they need, whether it's counseling or mental health services or whatever.

Ms. Couric. That sounds great, but do you enroll every parent in America in parenting classes?

The President. No. I think what you need is—Hillary's told me this morning—we got up, and we talked late, late last night about this. And then we got up this morning, and we were talking again. And she said—I thought it was a great idea—she said, "What's worked in this country to change societies?" We just had a big announcement today from Secretary Shalala that teen pregnancy's gone down for another year. There's been a national campaign against teen pregnancy, a real movement that asked all sectors of our society, starting with parents, but including everyone else, to do something on this. We've seen a decline in drunk driving, largely spurred, I think, by Mothers and Students Against Drunk Driving. We saw a national campaign to get people to wear their seatbelts when they were driving. And she said, and I agree, we need a national campaign that mobilizes all these things, that doesn't pretend that guns are the issue, that culture is the whole issue, that parents are the whole issue, that school safety is the whole issue, but deals with all of this together. If the American people make up their mind that we're going to do better on this, we'll do better.

Entertainment Industry's Role

Ms. Couric. But as you know, Mr. President, parents and children and families are bombarded with these violent images every day on television, in the movies. Video games reward children for obliterating figures with virtual bullets and bombs. Many parents want to do the right thing, but these cultural influences are so enormously strong, they feel as if they're swimming against this tide.

The President. They are. I have two or three things to say about that.

First of all, the first amendment prohibits us from banning some of these things, but we now have a television rating system, to go with the movies rating system. We will soon have all new televisions with a V-chip in them, so the rating systems can be enforced by parents. We are seeing more and more technology develop which will allow some websites to be blocked by parents, if they're inappropriate.

We first have to try to get parents more control over the exposure of their children to the culture of violence. The second thing we have to do is to challenge the entertainment industry to minimize the use of gratuitous violence and not to present it in a way that will desensitize people to the pain, the agony, and ultimately, the finality of violence.

Ms. Couric. But for many of those people, that's their stock and trade.

The President. It is, and there's a market for it. The American people buy it. They purchase it. They lap it up. But I think we have to face the fact that kids today are growing up in a culture that is more violent, culturally violent. The crime rate has been going down for 6 years overall, but the images are violent. And therefore, children that are more vulnerable are more likely, a, to be desensitized to violence and then to actually be desensitized to the impact of their employing violence.

But I think in the end you've got to take it back to the fact that we all have responsibilities, and it starts with parents. We have to help convince our children that they should

not have their actions controlled or directed outside them, and they shouldn't let other people define what kind of people they are. And we've then got to do more in the schools, with counseling, with mediation, with getting mental health services where they need it. And we've got to then ask ourselves what are the further responsibilities of the entertainment community, what are the responsibilities of the Government?

Go back to the gun industry, something they could do, that I think would be great—I'm talking about the manufacturers, now—they ought to voluntarily come forward, as many have, and say, we're going to have more child trigger locks. They even are now developing technologies where a thumb print can be imprinted on a gun and only the people who have the print can fire the gun. There are lots of things that can be done, but if we're all caught up in this and it becomes our obsession, I know we will do better. I know we will.

Ms. Couric. Some Members of Congress have asked for an emergency summit meeting at the White House, with leaders of the entertainment industry. Do you plan to have that summit?

The President. Well, I plan to bring some high-level folks from the entertainment industry and from other sectors of our society that I think can be active here together at the White House in the near future, and then figure out how we can put together the elements of a national campaign. I think the entertainment industry is going to have to be a big part of it.

What I think is a mistake is—I think it would be a mistake for the people who don't want to offend the NRA to blame Hollywood and the people that don't want to offend Hollywood to blame the NRA, instead of keeping our children and their safety and their future in mind and asking ourselves, what should we do about guns, what should we do about culture, what should we do about the schools, how can we help the parents, and what is Government's responsibility? Those are the big questions. We should ask and answer all of them, not just one.

Ms. Couric. Mr. President, can you say to Hollywood executives, look, I need your help? Or is it tough to put pressure on them, given the fact that they've been so supportive of you and so generous to your campaigns?

The President. No. No, it's easier for me to do, I think in some ways, because I know them. Keep in mind, the first time I went out to Hollywood and did this in a highly public way was in late 1993. And then we got a lot of Hollywood executives in, and they played a major role in the development of the television rating systems, which was essential to make the V-chip work.

So we got a lot of support out of the entertainment community for the rating systems and for the V-chip. We've gotten a remarkable amount of support in the years since from the high-tech community for control technologies on the Internet. So I think that—they don't go as far as I wish they would often on the violent content of some movies and some television shows and some video games, but there has been progress made.

One of the big problems we've got now is to make sure parents understand how to use the V-chip on television and understand how to use the blocking technologies on the Internet. Most parents are like me, they're not nearly as computer literate as their children are. And we've got a big job there to do.

But yes, I have no problem asking them to do more and challenging them to do more. That's easy. The difficult thing is to ask all of those questions of all of those people I mentioned. That's why I think the First Lady's idea of having a national campaign in which we all get caught up is the right way to go here.

Ms. Couric. And yet, it inevitably gets so mired in politics, and the best of intentions, it seems, are——

The President. Well, I think the only thing that gets mired in politics on this score, really, is when you have to pass a bill in Congress that's opposed by powerful interest groups. But otherwise, I think at a community level and in terms of empowering the schools and the parents and organizing groups to demand changes, I think it will be pretty straightforward.

And even in Congress, as I told this group I spoke to a few days ago, if the American

people want change badly enough, the Congress will respond. They'll go beyond partisan politics. They'll go beyond interest group politics. If they believe the American people want it bad enough, they'll respond.

Ms. Couric. Mr. President, thank you again for your time. We really appreciate it.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 4:25 p.m. in the Library at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Charlton Heston, president, National Rifle Association. This interview was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 30. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Memorandum on Assistance to Refugees Fleeing Kosovo

April 29, 1999

Presidential Determination No. 99–22

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Determination Pursuant to Section 2(c)(1) of the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962, as Amended

Pursuant to section 2(c)(1) of the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962, as amended, 22 U.S.C. 2601(c)(1), I hereby determine that it is important to the national interest that up to $20 million be made available from the U.S. Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund to meet urgent and unexpected needs relating to the program under which the United States will provide refuge in the United States to refugees fleeing the Kosovo crisis.

These funds may be used to meet the urgent and unexpected needs of refugees, displaced persons, victims of conflict, and other persons at risk due to the Kosovo crisis. These funds may be used, as appropriate, to provide contributions to international and nongovernmental organizations.

You are authorized and directed to inform the appropriate committees of the Congress of this determination and the use of funds under this authority, and to arrange for the publication of this determination in the *Federal Register*.

William J. Clinton

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 30.

Remarks Announcing Measure to Address School Violence

April 30, 1999

Ladies and gentlemen, in the last several days, like most Americans, I have spent an enormous amount of time following the events in Colorado, talking to family and friends and others. And I have some thoughts on that that I want to share with you today.

Let me begin by saying we got some more good news today on the economic front with the word that our economy expanded by 4.5 percent in the first quarter of this year. This news provides both more evidence that we should stick with our economic strategy and also is a worthwhile reminder that for all the challenges we face at home and abroad we are, indeed, a fortunate people. We are strong enough to meet those challenges.

Over the past 10 days our whole Nation has been united in grief with the people of Littleton, Colorado. We have also been profoundly moved by the courage, the common sense, and the fundamental goodness of Littleton students, teachers, parents, and public servants as they have spoken to us of the tragic events there. I have listened carefully to what they have said and to other young people and parents who have been on the townhall meetings and those whom I have met personally.

We should recognize the simple truth that there is no simple, single answer. We should not be fighting about who takes the blame. Instead, we should all be looking for ways to take responsibility, and we should be doing that together.

As we have united in grief, now we should unite in action. If we ask the right question, "what can we do to give your children safe, whole childhoods?" then there will be answers for parents and children, for teachers, communities, and for those who influence the lives and the environment in which our children live, including those of us in government, religious leaders, the entertainment and Internet communities, those who produce explosives and weapons, and those who use them lawfully.