

And I think the question is, what can we do to reduce the volume of violence to which our youngest people are exposed? And that's why we're doing what we can do on this, on the entertainment. But I will say this, the entertainment industry, at least in the beginning, has been more responsive to a lot of these things than the gun industry. Now the gun manufacturers are coming along, but I think the entertainment industry is going to have to do a lot more, a lot more.

Mr. Gibson. But just a quick question. Sony makes the "Doom" game—I don't mean to pick out that one game—but Sony is a huge contributor to the Democratic Party. So you have access to the president of Sony. If you picked up the phone and were talking to him, what would you say to him?

The President. I would ask him to change the game. And I think that we need to take steps to make sure that younger people don't get it. I think people get this stuff too young.

What you say, by the way, is right. Again I will say, most of the people that—you can show them things; they can play games or whatever; and they're not going to be affected. But what you have to be sensitive to is if you fill a society with this and you have more kids that are more vulnerable anyway because they have less supervision at home than in other societies and they have easier access to guns, then you have created a combustible mix which will lead you to more instances of young violence. That's the deal.

That's why—that's the argument I make to the entertainment industry all the time; that's why they should do more. And that's why the gun people should do more. And that's why parents and communities should do more. It's why you should do more to try to help identify children like this.

[At this point, the discussion continued. The next question directed to the President was by a student who asked what he thought about smart guns.]

The President. First of all, I think it's very important. I think that one of the things we've been trying to do and that the gun manufacturers—and I want to say something positive about the people that are trying to help. The gun manufacturers, most of them, have agreed to work with us and now support

legislation to require child trigger locks, which will be somewhat helpful. Now, older children can figure out how to undo them, but still they'll have a lot of accidental deaths, and they're important.

Pretty soon, you will have technology available which you can put into the guns that will raise the costs some in the beginning, like all technology does, but like all technology, the costs will come down quickly, which will mean that only people who have the right fingerprints can fire the gun. And that will be a huge thing.

Then, we'll have to do a lot of gun buy-back programs and other things in communities that will increase safety, and it's important.

[A student who was cocaptain of her schools rifle team stated that the first thing she learned was safety.]

The President. It's one thing that I would like to see, actually, the NRA do. When I was Governor of my State, I worked with them, and they did a lot of very good work on hunter education programs just like you're talking about, and nobody should have a gun that hasn't been trained to use it. You can't get a driver's license unless you can drive a car, and I completely agree with you about that.

[A student asked if the President could explain what purpose automatic guns and semi-automatic rifles served.]

The President. No, but I tried to ban them all in 1994, and we were able to ban 19 kinds of assault weapons. But the people who were against what I was trying to do were able to keep some loopholes in the law, one of which we're closing now, to have these big magazines in the guns, you know, the big clips. And a lot of the imported weapons are still legal. So I spent the last 5 years trying to get rid of all them. I think they should all be rendered illegal. They also grandfathered in those that were in existence before '94, but I think all of them ought to be taken off the markets. That's what I think. And I'm going to try to keep making progress with Congress to do that.

[A student stated that it sounded like the President thought it would be good if gun

prices were back down after the technology was developed.]

The President. No, it's a good thing they'll go up.

[She then stated that she thought it was important to raise the price of weapons as high as possible, as was being done with cigarettes, to keep them out of children's hands.]

The President. I agree with you. I didn't mean to—I was just pointing out that when we try to get these things through Congress as requirements, that's one of the things that will always be said. But I think it ought to be—I think this identification thing Jonathan mentioned can make a big difference.

[At this point, the discussion continued. A student who had accidentally wounded his best friend asked the President if he believed that background checks could really keep guns out of the wrong hands.]

The President. Yes, but it can't prevent all of them. That is, it—we have actual numbers on it. We know how many people we've prevented from getting handguns, because they had criminal records, since we've put it in. But there are so many guns, that it doesn't prevent everybody from getting it.

And one of the real problems is, when children are in places where they have easy access to guns, then you can have what happened—you're a brave guy to be here. Where's your friend? Which one's your friend? You want to say something about this?

[A student asked the President if some one told authorities about another student with a gun, how could they prevent becoming a victim.]

The President. See, I went to T.C. Williams High School, right across the river here, where I don't think they have medical—excuse me—metal detectors.

Mr. Gibson. It's early. [Laughter]

The President. It's early. But they have this hotline, they have the student hotline. And if a student there knows that somebody has a gun who shouldn't, they know two things if they call, and both things are important: One is, they know they won't be identified; and two is, they know there will be some

responsible person to actually follow up on it. So I think that is something that other schools should consider doing.

[A student asked the President if he thought there was a difference between owning a hunting rifle or a handgun and an assault rifle.]

The President. Well, first of all, a lot of avid sports people would tell you that they do some of that with handguns, too. But generally, yes, I think there's a big difference between assault weapons and other weapons. Some people claim they use them for sporting purposes, but no one needs them. And there is a difference between handguns and other weapons, because handguns are used more, they're easier to conceal, and they're more likely to be used for illegal purposes and less likely to be used for legal purposes. Therefore, I think it is legitimate to have higher standards on owning them and greater requirements on background checks and greater requirements on whether they should be registered or not. That's what I believe.

NOTE: The interview began at approximately 7:05 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House, moving later to the Roosevelt Room for the discussion with students. In his remarks, he referred to President Martti Ahtisaari of Finland; Special Envoy and former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin of Russia; and President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady and the student participants.

Remarks at a Breakfast for Representative Nick J. Rahall II

June 4, 1999

Thank you. First of all, I want to say to Congressman Rahall and his family, and Congressman Wise and Mr. O'Neill—Congressman Patrick Kennedy was, a few moments ago, was here with us downstairs. I am very honored to be here and glad to have a chance to come here for Nick Rahall.

You know, he was talking all about the burdens of being 50. I thought it was burdensome, too, until I carefully considered the

alternative. [Laughter] And I have enjoyed my advancing years ever since.

I want to say, too, a special word of thanks to the people who are here from West Virginia, a State that has been uncommonly good and generous to me and to Vice President Gore in two elections and in the times in between, a State that has struggled with a lot of economic problems from coal to steel that we have been working hard to address and will continue to do so. And I want to thank all of you for being here for Nick.

We both ran for Congress when we were 27. The only difference is I got beat, and he got elected. [Laughter] I've often wondered what would have happened in my life if I had been elected to Congress when I was 27. [Laughter] The one thing I did miss was the chance to serve with Tip O'Neill, a man I admire very much, and I'm very glad that Tom is here today.

There are many things that I appreciate about Nick Rahall. I appreciate the work he's done in transportation. I appreciate the fact that he and Bob both have stood by me in pursuing an economic strategy that has really brought our country back and given us the biggest surplus in history and given us a chance not only to pay down our debt but to save Social Security and Medicare for the baby boom generation in a way that does not require any tax increases whatever and can, in fact, enable us to strengthen our economy. And I'm very grateful for that.

I'm very grateful that he has supported the efforts that I have tried to make to promote peace around the world. And like Nick and Bob, I hope that the announcement of the last few hours, the last day, in Kosovo portends a genuine agreement that will be honestly implemented and that will lead to real reversal of the ethnic cleansing there, that the refugees will be able to go home in security and self-government, that the international force will be able to go in, that the Serb forces will be withdrawn.

I ask you to be both thankful and cautious. I have dealt with the Serbian leader now for over 6 years. There have been many agreements, and the only one that was kept was the one, in Bosnia, where we had a force on the ground and a specific agreement. It

has a lot in common with this, and we're hopeful, but we need to see real action here.

I also want to thank Nick for his work for peace in the Middle East and for sensitive and fair treatment for Arab-Americans and in American foreign policy, for the legitimate interests of all the people of the Middle East. He has done a very, very good job, and I'm very proud of him for that.

I think it's interesting—because I come from a State that is demographically very much like West Virginia—in the 1980 census, Arkansas and West Virginia had the highest percentage of people living in their State who were born there of any two States in America and, I believe, the highest percentage of people who identified themselves as Baptists. [Laughter]

And we were an awful lot alike. We gave—when President Carter ran for President in 1976, next to his home State of Georgia, Arkansas and West Virginia gave him the second and third-highest percentages of the vote. And West Virginia has been in the top five States for me, in both elections.

They're hardworking people that have overcome great difficulties. They're not, as compared with many other States, particularly diverse. And I think it's a real tribute to Nick Rahall that he has spent a lot of time, and that his constituents have supported him in spending time, trying to make us sensitive to people who come from different racial and ethnic and religious backgrounds. Because the United States, of all the nations in the world, is perhaps the most blessed, going in to the 21st century, because we live in a global economy and a global society, and because we are so diverse.

But if you look around the world today, whether it's in the Middle East or in the Balkans, in Kosovo, and before that in Bosnia, it is truly amazing that as we contemplate the miracles of the 21st century—the spread of technology, the breathtaking advances in chemistry and in biology, the decoding of the human gene, and the dramatic potential for increasing both the length and quality of life—that we are bedeviled today by the oldest—the oldest—demon of human society: people's vulnerability to fear those who are different from them, who aren't part of their tribe, their crowd. And fear can turn quickly

to hatred; hatred can turn quickly to dehumanization; dehumanization can turn quickly to justifying killing people who are different from us.

And we have an obligation to lead the world away from that. That's what we've been trying to do in Kosovo. But I would also say we have an obligation, if we want to do good things around the world, to be as good as we can be here at home.

This morning Hillary and I appeared on "Good Morning America" with about 40 young people, to talk about violence against children in our society, what can be done in the aftermath of the terrible events at Littleton. I will say this: I have never in my public life seen as much openness by so many people across party and other lines to try do something that really will make a difference to give our children a safer future. So in the time I have left as President, I assure you, I will be devoting an enormous amount of effort to that worthy cause.

Again, the last point I would like to make is this: There is a great deal still to be done in this country that we should do before—before—the new millennium and before I leave office in 2001. A great deal that I have done and would like to do would be totally impossible without Members of Congress who share our values and our vision and our ideas for the future. And that's another reason I'm proud to be here.

The final thing I want you to know is this—maybe most of you know this. Last year, in 1998, we knew we had a chance to make an historic election. And it had been since 1822—since 1822—that the party of the President in office—that his party had picked up seats in the House of Representatives in the second term of the Presidency. Since the Civil War, even counting first terms, it's only happened twice before, under Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt. We were being outspent last time by \$100 million.

Nick Rahall stepped forward and gave a substantial contribution from his campaign account to other members and other candidates who were out there running, that had a pivotal impact on what is a truly historical election that we had in 1998, because we not only had good candidates and we not only were running on saving Social Security and

the Patients' Bill of Rights and building modern schools and keeping our economy going, we had to have some way of getting that message out. It's unprecedented for Members on our side to do that, and he did it. And I will never forget that as long as I live.

So for all those reasons, I'm honored to be here with him and with the next Governor of West Virginia.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. at the National Democratic Club. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas P. O'Neill III, son of former House Speaker Tip O'Neill.

Remarks on Presenting the President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities Awards

June 4, 1999

Situation in the Balkans

The President. Thank you very much, Jill. Secretary Herman; Chairman Coelho; Mr. Dart; to Janice Lachance, head of our Office of Personnel Management. Ladies and gentlemen, I have looked forward to this day, and I am delighted to see you all here. I'll have more to say about the others who are up here with me in a moment.

This is my only opportunity to appear before the press today, so I hope you will also indulge me if I say a few words about the recent developments in Kosovo. For 72 days now we have been engaged with our Allies in a difficult but just and necessary military campaign, with three simple goals: the return of over 800,000 innocent Kosovar refugees to their homes, with safety and self-government; the withdrawal of Serb forces; and the deployment of an international security force, with NATO at its core, to protect all the people of that shattered land.

Yesterday the Serbian authorities indicated they would accept those conditions. Russian Special Envoy Chernomyrdin and Finnish President Ahtisaari played instrumental and courageous roles in making this possible. I am grateful to them, and so should all Americans be.

Tomorrow military officials from NATO and Serbia will meet to work out the details

of the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo. This is the next necessary step for implementation of our conditions. I'm pleased that it will take place, and I hope the talks will proceed professionally and expeditiously.

As I said yesterday, our diplomatic and military efforts will continue until we see Serb forces begin to withdraw in a full-scale manner. Our experience in the Balkans teaches us that true peace can only come when progress in discussions is followed by progress on the ground.

At the same time, there is an enormous opportunity to be seized here, a chance to shift our focus from defeating something evil to building something good; a chance to work with our Allies to bring a stable and prosperous and democratic southeastern Europe, in which people are never again singled out for destruction simply because of their religious faith or their ethnic origin. This is a goal that has been worth fighting for over the last weeks, a goal which must be uppermost in our minds as we make sure our conditions are met, a goal we must work for with steadfast determination in the months and in the years to come.

And I believe that the overwhelming majority of Americans share this goal. We do not want our children to grow up in a world which is dominated by people who believe they can kill innocent civilians because of the way they worship God or the way they were born.

Disability Employment Awards

Fifty years ago Harry Truman, the very first President to present the awards that we present today, set a goal for our Nation. I'd like to repeat it: to give every American with a disability the chance to play their full part in strengthening our Nation and sharing the greatest satisfaction of American life, to be independent and self-supporting.

Today we gather to honor three Americans whose efforts to bring more and more people with disabilities into the world of work have moved us closer to that great and just goal. Since the founding of our Nation, work has been at the heart of the American dream. Because millions of Americans have had the opportunity to work and to build better lives

for themselves and their families, our Nation is enjoying historic strength and prosperity. Through work, we reinforce the values that hold us together as a society, the values of responsibility, perseverance, striving for the future.

And in so many ways, we define ourselves as Americans not only by our families and our hometowns but by our work. Often, the first question Americans ask each other is not, who are your parents or where do you live but what do you do. Today, still, there are too many Americans with disabilities who've never had the chance to answer that question. Even as we celebrate more than 18 million new jobs and a nationwide unemployment rate of 4.2 percent, the lowest in a generation, as the Secretary has said, 75 percent of Americans with disabilities remain unemployed. And of that number, 72 percent, almost three-quarters, say they want to go to work.

This is not just a missed opportunity for Americans with disabilities. It's a missed opportunity for America. This is an era now of labor shortages, where companies go begging for employees they need to stay competitive in the global economy. And we simply cannot afford to ignore the potential of millions of potential workers simply because they have a disability.

One of the things I have spent a great deal of time on in the last year, particularly, is trying to work with my economic advisers on issues that only peripherally involve the disability community but that you are a central part of resolving. And it is this: How can we continue to grow this economy and lift the standards of living of our people until we embrace everybody who has not participated in the recovery; keep the recovery going, which is already the longest peacetime recovery in history, and not have an explosion of inflation?

There are—if you think about it, there are only, I would argue to you, three possible answers to that. You either have to get more workers who are unemployed, generally, in the society, into the work force so that they not only are helping themselves but helping the rest of us by becoming consumers and taxpayers and growing the economy; you have to go to those discreet areas where