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or endure when they're not so good—the rhythms of life, the ups and downs, the twists and turns in the road, the unpredictability; and the more you come to understand how precious moments like this are, when things seem to be going well, and how profoundly important it is not to just reach out and grab the biggest apple on the tree that looks so good but to keep thinking about tomorrow.

So what we do with the surplus will affect how you raise your children, as well as how your parents fare in retirement. It will affect the quality of the air your children breathe. It will affect the texture of the society in which you live and whether we are really coming together in a way that celebrates our diversity and makes life more interesting, but still binds us tighter and tighter together as a national family. It will affect all of that.

So when you leave here, make yourself a promise. This summer when you go home to your friends, next year when you go back to school, talk to people about the ideas. Oh yes, the people are important, and I'm glad I had the chance to serve at this time, but the ideas and the values behind them are far more important. And you, you can carry them into the 21st century and guarantee that America's best days are in your future.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:38 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom at the Washington Court Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Harold D. Powell, national president, College Democrats of America.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Members of S.A.F.E. Colorado and an Exchange With Reporters

July 15, 1999

The President. Good afternoon. I want to welcome the groups of young people from Colorado S.A.F.E. here to the White House, as well as those who brought them here from Colorado, the co-leaders, David Winkler and Ben Gelt. David will speak in a moment. And I want to say again how grateful I am that these young people have come. Secretary Summers and Attorney General Reno and I have just had a remarkable session.

It has now been 3 months since the horrible day in Littleton, since the crack of gunfire and the cries and the funerals. And now as the shock and grief subside, as the cameras and satellite trucks move on to different events, it might be easy to forget and to have the Nation weaken its resolve to keep our children safe from gun violence. But America must not forget that event or those which occurred in schools last year or the fact that 13 of our children die every single day from gun violence.

These young people represent millions of Americans who have come together at the grassroots to take action. They have come to Washington to hold our feet to the fire and to make their voices heard. And I thank them for coming.

I have just had, as I said, a fascinating question-and-answer session with these young people. They have asked good questions, and they have given good suggestions. And they are plainly impatient with the lack of action on the important legislation before Congress.

This afternoon they will carry that same message to Capitol Hill. I hope the Congress will listen very, very carefully to them. For the past 3 months, the gun lobby has been calling the shots on Capitol Hill; now it's time for Congress to listen to the lobbyists who truly matter—our children, the people who will be most affected by what is or is not done by the Congress.

This is not a partisan issue out there in America, indeed, not a partisan issue anywhere but Washington. Americans of all ages, all backgrounds, all political philosophies support strong legislation to close dangerous loopholes in our gun laws. The vast majority of Americans believe passionately that no criminal who has failed a Brady background check and been refused a gun by an honest dealer should be able to turn around and buy a gun at a gun show. Florida, hardly one of our most liberal States, voted 72 percent in a referendum last November to do just that.

We believe that every handgun should be made childproof with a safety lock. We know that high-capacity ammunition gun clips are designed for war, not hunting, and they have no place in the American market. We believe any juvenile convicted of a violent crime should be banned, as an adult would, from owning a handgun.

But 3 months after Columbine, Congress has yet to send me a bill to make these commonsense gun reforms the law of the land. The Senate has passed them, and though they died in the House we still—we still—have an opportunity to make them the law this year. I ask, as the young people ask here today: Don't forget Littleton; don't allow the victims at Columbine to have died in vain; don't forget the 13 children who die every day from gun violence. Many, many, many of them can be saved.

We must not lose the urgency of our mission. It is not too late. How many more children must become victims of an illegal or poorly secured weapon? How many more parents must be robbed of the opportunity to see their children grow up into the fine young people we see standing behind me today?

I ask Congress to end this delay and to send me a strong bill like the one passed by the Senate. I ask Congress to reaffirm these young people's faith in America, in our system of democracy. I ask Congress to listen to the young lobbyists who will be on Capitol Hill today; send them home with the knowledge that Washington can hear their voices, too, that men and women who serve in democracy's house, the U.S. Capitol, truly serve the American people.

There are less than 2 months now before the start of a new school year. Let's show all our children that when it comes to making their classrooms and communities safe from gun violence, America did not take a summer vacation. Let's show them that politics can stop at the schoolhouse door, that this summer can be a season of progress and a season of safety.

I again say, I wish every American could have seen and heard these young people as the Attorney General, the Secretary of the Treasury, and I have just done. I was impressed, amazed, and heartened. I ask the Members of Congress to open their eyes, their hearts, their minds to what they have to say.

Now I'd like to introduce one of the people who is most responsible for all these fine young people being here today, the co-leader of this S.A.F.E. trip, David Winkler.

David.

[*At this point, David Winkler, co-leader of 'S.A.F.E. Trip," the Washington, DC, visit of members of Sane Alternatives to Firearms Epidemic (S.A.F.E. Colorado), made brief remarks.*]

The President. Great job. That was terrific. Thank you.

Mr. Winkler. I want to thank all the students for coming on this trip, and all of our chaperons for making it possible. Thanks, guys. You all deserve a big hand. [*Applause*]

The President. I think if you all stayed a couple of weeks we would do very well. This is great. Thank you.

Yes.

Middle East and Northern Ireland Peace Processes

Q. Mr. President, a little bit later on today you will be meeting with Prime Minister Barak, who has asked you to take a step back from the peace process—[*inaudible*]—I'm wondering, first of all, if you are considering—do you think the time is right for him to do that? Conversely, do you think the time is right for you to get back into, directly, the Northern Ireland peace process?

The President. Well, let me say, first of all, on all these other questions unrelated to this subject, as all of you know, I'm going to be making a public statement with Prime Minister Barak later, and I will be happy to answer questions then. I'm not sure that the way you've characterized it is exactly what his request to me is going to be, so I think I ought to wait until we are out there together.

On Northern Ireland, let me say that this is a difficult day for those of us who have worked for years and who have worked over the last several weeks. It is a particularly difficult day for Prime Minister Blair and Prime Minister Ahern, who have performed heroic service. And it is hard for most Americans, I'm sure, and most people throughout the world to understand how a peace process could be stalled when both sides agree on every element of the peace process and both sides agree on exactly what they both have to do between now and next May. And the idea that this whole thing could fall apart

over an argument, over who goes first, sounds more reminiscent of something that might happen to these young people in their school careers, 6 or 7 years earlier in their lives.

I mean, that's basically what's going on here, and you all need to understand it. There is no difference of opinion here about what the Good Friday accords require, what the communities of Ireland and Northern Ireland have voted for, what they are all committed to do. They are having a fight over who goes first, and acting today as if the whole thing could be abandoned over that.

That cannot be allowed to happen. I do not believe it will be allowed to happen. I believe there is too much invested in this. And I believe sooner rather than later we'll get this thing back on track.

But I've done what I could, along with the people in the communities and the British and the Irish Prime Ministers—they have been wonderful. I don't know what else they could have done. I don't know what else I could have done. But I just don't believe, as far as we've come, that this thing is going to come apart. This is not a good day for us, but I do not believe that it's going to come apart, and we'll keep working on it.

And I'll answer the other questions later.

Gun Control Legislation

Q. On gun control, will you veto legislation from Capitol Hill on juvenile justice if it does not contain a gun control provision?

The President. Well, I want to talk to the Attorney General about what else is in the bill, and I'd like to get her advice on that before I make a final decision. But I'll tell you what I will do: I will veto any legislation that appears to be gun control legislation that actually weakens the law. I mean, one of the things they were trying to do up there before was to actually go back and weaken the pawnshop part of the law and say that if a criminal puts a gun in a pawnshop and goes to jail, when they come back there shouldn't be a background check if you're coming back to get your own gun at a pawnshop. That's been the law for years and years, and they're even trying to weaken that law.

So I will not, in any way, shape, or form, countenance a weakening of the law. I will do whatever I think—I'll tell you the answer to that—I will do whatever I am convinced is best to increase the chances that we can pass responsible legislation to protect our children from guns, to keep guns out of the hands of people who should not have them. That's what I will do.

But in terms of the details, I think the Attorney General will have to give me a briefing on it before I can make a final decision.

Thank you, and I'll see you in a couple of hours. Thank you.

Patients' Bill of Rights

Q. Patients' Bill of Rights?

The President. It's still a good bill. I'm bewildered by that, actually. I mean, I don't see how the majority is going to explain—we had 100 percent of our caucus and a couple from theirs, and I listened to the debate, and it still doesn't make any sense to me. All they can say is—either they can say, "We just don't want doctors to be able to refer their patients to specialists, or people to be able to stop at the first emergency room, or women to be able to keep their gynecologist throughout a pregnancy, or people with cancer to be able to keep their oncologist throughout a chemotherapy treatment," or they have to say what the health insurers are saying, which is, "Oh, this is going to really raise premiums."

The problem with their argument and all these millions of dollars they're spending on their advertising is that the Congressional Budget Office, which as you know—all of you know this now—for more than 4 years the Republican majority has held up as the sole authority on anything having to do with money in Washington, DC—they have held it up as an icon, and the Congressional Budget Office tells them that, at most, this could raise premiums $2 a month.

Now, so the health insurers have paid advertisement that says something different from their own Congressional Budget Office, and so now, they're only too happy to abandon the Congressional Budget Office that they waved in front of us like a sacred body for 4½ years.

So I don't know what's going on there. I know one thing—again, that's just like gun violence—you go out into this country and you will find 70 percent of Republicans, Democrats, and independents who believe in the provisions of the Patients' Bill of Rights. And you tell them that Congress says it will cost 2 bucks a month, the Federal Government experience is it costs less than one dollar a month, and the numbers will stay solid.

So there's something else going on here. And all I can say is I'm going to keep working for a good one. And I just—this is—this one is truly beyond me. I figure when the Congressional Budget Office came up after they had nourished it as the end-all and be-all of financial wisdom for 5 years, or nearly 5 years, that we would be home free and we could pass this in a bipartisan fashion. And the health insurers won't let them do it—that's really what's going on. They won't let them do it. And I think it's a sad day for health care in America. But we're not done yet, and this won't die.

Thank you.

2000 Election

Q. Are you being overly protective of Mr. Gore's campaign, sir? You've agreed to raise funds for him, and you took a shot at Mr. Bush yesterday. How do you respond?

The President. That's—I have nothing to say about that. Everything I said yesterday was in complete good spirits, and everyone that was there knew that we were all having a very good time—that we were all having a good time. And I think we ought to lighten up here on the politics and focus on the work.

You know, we're going to have an election in November and then you'll have somebody else to chew on after 2001. But between now and then, everyone who is in Congress and everyone who is in the executive branch is drawing a paycheck every 2 weeks—from them and their parents. They're paying us to go to work. And what we need to do is to be less obsessed with the politics and more obsessed with substance and deal with these issues.

And what I was trying to do yesterday was basically cut the atmosphere a little bit, give us something to laugh about—which they did—and then talk for a good period of time, probably more than a half hour, about the issues that are before us. I want us to focus on the work to be done. There's plenty of time later to worry about that. All of us that are drawing a check ought to be doing the people's business now.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:25 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; and Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel and an Exchange With Reporters

July 15, 1999

President Clinton. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted to welcome Prime Minister Barak to Washington. As all of you know, he is the most decorated soldier in Israel's history. And as a soldier, as Army Chief of Staff, Interior Minister, and Foreign Minister, he has made immeasurable contributions to his nation's security and its emergence as a modern, thriving democratic society, time and again taking on tough tasks and getting them done right.

Now, as Prime Minister he has put Middle East peace at the top of his agenda, telling his fellow citizens that Israel's triumph, and I quote, "will not be complete until true peace, trust, and cooperation reign between Israel and its neighbors."

Mr. Prime Minister, if your mentor, Yitzhak Rabin, were here today, I believe he would be very gratified, seeing the leadership of his cherished nation in your most capable hands.

For more than half a century, the United States has stood proudly with Israel and for the security of its people and its nation. Now, Mr. Prime Minister, as Israel again walks bravely down the path of peace, America will walk with you, ready to help in any way we can.

As we have seen before here at this house, as Israelis, Palestinians, Egyptians, and Jordanians have come together, what at first seems unlikely, even impossible, can actually become reality when the will for peace is strong. America will help as you move forward, as you put implementation of the Wye