

addressed the Boys Nation delegates, thanked us for our resolution on civil rights and bemoaned the fact that the Governors, who had just met a week before we did, could not reach agreement; they could not reach across party lines and regional lines to stand up for the elemental principal of civil rights. And he thanked us for doing it.

Thirty years later, 36 years later, it looks like Boys Nation was right, and the Governors' Association was wrong. [*Laughter*] Just look around this crowd today. Look at all the differences represented by the young men and women here. Who could possibly say that America is not better off for the progress we have made? But you need to know a lot of people lost their jobs in election sticking up for civil rights in places where it wasn't so popular. A lot of Congressmen lost their jobs in 1994 because they voted to bring the deficit down, or they voted for the Brady bill or the assault weapons ban, which helped to give up the lowest crime rate in 26 years.

But sometimes you have to look to the long run. And one of the things that the sad events of the last couple of weeks have reminded us all of is that the gifts of life and the burdens of life do not fall according to some rational plan—that all of our lives, even if we live to be 80—or in the case of Secretary Riley's father, over 90—life is still fleeting. And the great test is to try to enjoy and make the most of every day and still sow the seeds for your children to have a better tomorrow.

That is what we are trying to do here. Thomas Jefferson said every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. If we can remember that here, I think we can once again reach across the party lines and the regional lines and think about the long-term interest of America. It has been a long, long time since our country has had a chance to make provisions for the next generation with absolute confidence, unencumbered by the burdens of just getting through the day. That is where we are. And I am determined to do everything I can to see that we make the most of it to give you the chance to live your dreams.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:52 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Teah Frederick, president, Girls Nation; Ryan Rippel, president, Boys Nation; and authors Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele.

Statement on Senate Action on Juvenile Crime and Gun Legislation

July 28, 1999

Today, after weeks of partisan delay, the Senate finally appointed conferees on juvenile crime and gun legislation. While I am heartened by this modest progress, more than 3 months have passed since the tragedy at Columbine, and Congress has yet to send me a bill to make commonsense gun reforms the law of the land. I challenge the House to follow the Senate's lead and appoint conferees before the August recess, so that the full Congress can get back to work and pass a bill with strong gun provisions as our children go back to school.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Burdensharing in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

July 28, 1999

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Pursuant to section 3 of the resolution of advice and consent to ratification of the Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949, on the Accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic (the "resolution"), I hereby transmit a report concerning Burdensharing in the Alliance.

This report is comprised of two sections, which provide the information required by section 3(2)(B) of the resolution to the extent that such information is available. The unclassified section covers common NATO budgets, national defense budgets and their adequacy, costs incurred to date in connection with the membership of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, and the status of discussions concerning NATO membership for Partnership for Peace countries. A classified addendum covers NATO members'

capabilities to deploy and sustain combat forces.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John W. Warner, chairman, Senate Committee on Armed Services; Floyd Spence, chairman, House Committee on Armed Services; Ted Stevens, chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations; C.W. Bill Young, chairman, House Committee on Appropriations; Jesse Helms, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; and Benjamin A. Gilman, chairman, House Committee on International Relations. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Remarks at “In Performance at the White House”

July 28, 1999

The President. Thank you. The first thing I want you to do is relax, because I’m not going to play, and you’ll have to—[laughter]—but I’ll be wishing.

At the millennium event on jazz we had here last year, the great Wynton Marsalis said that just as we wouldn’t have democracy without the foundation of our Constitution, so we wouldn’t have jazz without the foundation of the blues. Like our Constitution, the blues is a great American tradition, whose power to move never seems to diminish and whose influence never seems to stop growing.

This compelling and wonderful music, once heard only on rural Southern porches and in South Side Chicago bars, now enjoys an audience as broad as America itself. In fact, now the whole world knows about the blues, and there are fans from Berlin to Bangkok who can tell you the life stories of blues icons like Bessie Smith and Robert Johnson. Today, there are more blues artists, more blues listeners, more blues clubs, and more blues recordings than ever before. Even TV commercials now feature the blues, which dramatically reduces the number of people who hit the mute button. [Laughter]

Tonight we celebrate the music that has given birth to or influenced the whole large landscape of American music, from “Rhapsody in Blue” to rap. So it’s fitting that our

host is a master of the great range of American music and entertainment, Miss Della Reese. If talent and personality are truly gifts from above, then Della Reese really has been “Touched by an Angel.” [Laughter] Please join me in welcoming Della Reese. [Applause]

[At this point, the program proceeded. Following the performances, the President made brief remarks, which are joined in progress.]

The President. —whether I want to be young like Jonny, or like B.B. when I’m a little older. [Laughter] They were all magnificent.

You know, we saw tonight in all these wonderful performers why blues is truly one of America’s great gifts to the world. Its appeal, we saw, literally spans the generations. Tonight we’ve been privileged to hear blues greats from every era.

I want to thank each and every one of them. Thank you, B.B. King. Thank you, John Cephas and Phil Wiggans. Thank you, Marcia Ball. Thank you, Jonny Lang. Thank you, bands. And thank you, Della Reese.

Thank you, and good night. Thank you.

[At this point, B.B. King presented the President with a guitar pick.]

The President. Now before you go, I’ve been saving my B.B. King picks for almost 20 years now. I’ve got another one tonight. [Laughter]

There is one more person that all of us have to thank this evening, Dick Notebaert with Ameritech. Let me tell you—Dick, I want you and Peggy to come up here, come on. He is about to leave his present position to start on a new adventure in life, and Hillary and I want to thank him for his long-standing support for these wonderful WETA’s “In Performance at the White House.” We have had so many incredible, incredible concerts here, thanks to the generosity of this gentleman and his fine company. And Dick and Peggy have accompanied us on so many nights, along with Sharon and Jay Rockefeller and many of you who’ve been here.

I want to thank all of you for coming tonight, especially the very large number of people from my native State and others who