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hosts; and Edward G. Rendell, general chair, Democratic National Committee. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Radio Address

March 4, 2000

Good morning. Today I want to speak with you about the senseless and heartbreaking gun violence that has shaken our Nation once again.

Yesterday, the community of Mount Morris Township, Michigan, held memorial services for a beautiful little girl who was shot to death in her first-grade classroom on Tuesday. Kayla Rolland was only 6 years old. When she walked to school with her older brother and sister, her backpack looked almost as big as she was, but she loved to carry books and read. In the words of her grandmother, she was a bright light who lit up everything wherever she went.

The community of Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania, was also devastated this week. On Wednesday, a gunman unloaded his fury and a .22 caliber revolver in a busy commercial center. Five men were killed or grievously wounded, including a young college student and a man who served his community as a priest for 23 years. These tragedies were not isolated events. From Littleton to Fort Worth, Paducah to Pearl, gun violence has stolen the lives of young and old alike. It has desecrated churches and classrooms and daycare centers. It's kept parents up at night and made schoolchildren afraid to get on the bus in the morning.

Every day, gunfire takes the lives of a dozen children in America. One University of New Hampshire survey showed that 60 percent of 15-year-olds said they could get hold of an unlocked gun. If you look just at the accidental gun deaths among children under 15, the rate in the United States is 9 times higher than in the other 25 industrial countries combined. This is intolerable, and we must act, because we can do something about it.

Last year, with a tie-breaking vote by Vice President Gore, the Senate passed a juvenile crime bill that would go a long way toward strengthening our gun laws, requiring child safety locks, banning large ammunition clips, and closing the gun show background check loophole.

The House passed a much weaker bill. And for the past 8 months, the leaders in Congress have simply failed to get together to complete a final bill for me to sign. I've called on congressional leaders to join me at the White House on Tuesday to break that logjam. In that meeting I'll insist that they get the job done. I want Congress to send me a final bill that closes the loophole that allows criminals to buy firearms at gun shows, bans the importation of high capacity ammunition clips, holds adults accountable when they allow young people to get their hands on deadly guns, and requires child safety locks for all new handguns, the kind of locks that would have prevented a first grader from taking Kayla Rolland's life.

I'll also ask for support on three other vital measures: to develop smart guns that can only be fired by the adults who own them; to require that new handgun buyers first get a photo license showing they passed the Brady background check and a gun safety course; and to hire 1,000 new gun prosecutors. Gun crime prosecutions already are up 16 percent since I took office, but we should do more.

In a country of 270 million people, no law can stop every act of gun violence. But we can't just throw up our hands as if gun safety laws don't make a difference. We all have a responsibility to do our part, parents, community leaders, members of the gun industry, and yes, Members of Congress, too.

When we passed the Brady bill, people argued it wouldn't make any difference because criminals don't buy guns at gun stores, they said. But it turned out a lot of them did. Brady background checks have now blocked gun purchases by 500,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers. And gun crime is down by more than 35 percent since 1993.

The only reason Congress hasn't already sent me a bill with comprehensive gun safety provisions is because of the pressure tactics and the threats of the NRA. In fact, the NRA now is launching a $20 million campaign to target and to defeat Members of Congress who support responsible gun safety laws. But

when first graders shoot first graders, it's time for Congress to be guided by their hearts and their heads, not by a fear or the pressure tactics of the NRA.

It's time for all of us to make our voices heard in the Halls of Congress. The very least we can do to honor the memory of little Kayla Rolland and all the other tragic victims of gun violence is to pass sensible gun safety legislation right now.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 1:05 p.m. on March 3 in the Los Gatos Room at the Silicon Valley Conference Center at Novell Headquarters, San Jose, CA, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 4. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 3 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception in Los Angeles, California

March 4, 2000

Thank you. Thank you, Neil. I want to begin by just telling you that from the moment I got out of the car, I realized that I was going to have a wonderful time this evening. I thank the Nazarians, the Farahniks, and the Kadishas, and all of you for being here.

Gray Davis was talking about this being the Governor's Mansion—when I walked in here and looked up at the spiral staircase, I said, "You know, I really do live in public housing, after all." [*Laughter*]

Seriously, let me say to all of you that I am profoundly honored to be here with you tonight because what our host said in his opening remarks about coming here from Iran with nothing and how well he has done, and all of you have done, is a testament to the power of faith and family and work. Thank you for having the rabbi here tonight. He even gave me a book to read tonight. [*Laughter*] I promised to read it as quickly as I can.

I ran for President because I felt that this country had the best system in the world if people were given the conditions and the tools in which their faith, their family, their work could flourish. And it has been a joy and an honor to serve. For whatever role I have played in our prosperity and our improving social progress and our role in peace around the world, I am very grateful. But I want you to think tonight about, also, the role you can play. There is no such thing as a time to completely rest, maybe a day, a week, but not a long time. And a country becomes great by always trying to do better. Sometimes in small steps, sometimes in large steps.

I believe some very basic, simple things. You said that the President is not royalty yet. Most of the people in the national political press certainly agree with that statement. [*Laughter*] But I came from the heartland of America. I was the first person in my family ever to graduate from college. But I was taught to believe something as a child I still believe. And I look around here, and I see the living embodiment.

I believe every person counts, that everyone should have a chance, that everyone has a responsible role to play in life, and that we all do better when we help each other. I believe that freedom is the best system of government to allow the values that any of us have to flourish. And the fact that you can come here, preserve your community, and be a part of the larger American community is stunning evidence that that is right.

I regret that so many of you had to leave your native land, one of the most wonderful places in all of human history, one of the most important places, culturally, in all of human history. And I hope and pray that what we have seen in three elections now, there, means that there is a movement toward openness and freedom there, too, and that someday all of you will be able to go home to visit and have two homes, complete and open and free.

I have done my best to support that process in the limited way any American President can. I have also done my best to stand against the forces of religious and racial and ethnic and tribal hatred throughout the world, as you pointed out, from Northern Ireland to the Middle East to Africa to the Balkans. I have tried to protect the right of every person in this country and to advance the right of every person in every country