AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

I'll do all I can to convince Congress and the American people to support it. And today I ask for your help.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:50 p.m. in the Kenny Auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to William R. Brody, president, Johns Hopkins University; and Paul Wolfowitz, dean, and Joanne Brainard, executive assistant to the associate dean for student affairs, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies. The President also referred to PNTR, permanent normal trade relations.

Message to the Congress on Permanent Normal Trade Relations Status for China

March 8, 2000

To the Congress of the United States:

Last November, after years of negotiation, we completed a bilateral agreement on accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) with the People's Republic of China (Agreement). The Agreement will dramatically cut import barriers currently imposed on American products and services. It is enforceable and will lock in and expand access to virtually all sectors of China's economy. The Agreement meets the high standards we set in all areas, from creating export opportunities for our businesses, farmers, and working people, to strengthening our guarantees of fair trade. It is clearly in our economic interest. China is concluding agreements with other countries to accede to the WTO. The issue is whether Americans get the full benefit of the strong agreement we negotiated. To do that, we need to enact permanent Normal Trade Relations (NTR) for China.

We give up nothing with this Agreement. As China enters the WTO, the United States makes no changes in our current market access policies. We preserve our right to withdraw market access for China in the event of a national security emergency. We make no changes in laws controlling the export of sensitive technology. We amend none of our trade laws. In fact, our protections against unfair trade practices and potential import surges are stronger with the Agreement than without it.

Our choice is clear. We must enact permanent NTR for China or risk losing the full benefits of the Agreement we negotiated, including broad market access, special import protections, and rights to enforce China's commitments through WTO dispute settlement. All WTO members, including the United States, pledge to grant one another permanent NTR to enjoy the full benefits in one another's markets. If the Congress were to fail to pass permanent NTR for China, our Asian, Latin American, Canadian, and European competitors would reap these benefits, but American farmers and other workers and our businesses might well be left behind.

We are firmly committed to vigorous monitoring and enforcement of China's commitments, and will work closely with the Congress on this. We will maximize use of the WTO's review mechanisms, strengthen U.S. monitoring and enforcement capabilities, ensure regular reporting to the Congress on China's compliance, and enforce the strong China-specific import surge protections we negotiated. I have requested significant new funding for China trade compliance.

We must also continue our efforts to make the WTO itself more open, transparent, and participatory, and to elevate consideration of labor and the environment in trade. We must recognize the value that the WTO serves today in fostering a global, rules-based system of international trade—one that has fostered global growth and prosperity over the past half century. Bringing China into that rules-based system advances the right kind of reform in China.

The Agreement is in the fundamental interest of American security and reform in China. By integrating China more fully into the Pacific and global economies, it will strengthen China's stake in peace and stability. Within China, it will help to develop the rule of law; strengthen the role of market forces; and increase the contacts China's citizens have with each other and the outside world. While we will continue to have strong disagreements with China over issues ranging from human rights to religious tolerance to foreign policy, we believe that bringing

China into the WTO pushes China in the right direction in all of these areas.

I, therefore, with this letter transmit to the Congress legislation authorizing the President to terminate application of Title IV of the Trade Act of 1974 to the People's Republic of China and extend permanent Normal Trade Relations treatment to products from China. The legislation specifies that the President's determination becomes effective only when China becomes a member of the WTO, and only after a certification that the terms and conditions of China's accession to the WTO are at least equivalent to those agreed to between the United States and China in our November 15, 1999, Agreement. I urge that the Congress consider this legislation as soon as possible.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
March 8, 2000.

Interview With Greta Van Susteren of CNN's Burden of Proof

March 8, 2000

Memphis Shootings

Ms. Van Susteren. Mr. President, thank you for joining us today. I want to first ask you your reaction—once again, this time Memphis, a fireman is dead, a police officer, and others. What's your reaction to this shooting?

The President. Well, as we're doing this interview, of course, we don't know all the facts, but it's a tragic thing for the city and for the families, because firemen and police, they put their lives on the line a lot, but they don't expect to be shot at the scene of a burning house. It's a terrible thing. And we just have to find the facts to know what happened and whether anything could have been done about it. It's very, very sad.

Michigan Shooting

Ms. Van Susteren. Another tragedy was the death of the 6-year-old, Kayla, in Michigan. And you met with her mother——

The President. I did.

Ms. Van Susteren. ——this week in the White House. What did you tell her?

The President. Well, first of all, I told her that as a father I could only imagine her heartbreak, that there's nothing worse in life than having your child die before you, especially in tragic circumstances. And I told her I would do what I could to reduce the chances of it happening again. And I was very impressed with her. She and her husband, Kayla's stepfather, I think they really decided they're going to commit themselves to try to do things that will make the schools safer, the streets safer, the kids less vulnerable to this sort of thing. And we talked about some of the specific things we were working on.

Parental Responsibility for Gun Violence

Ms. Van Susteren. And one of the specific things is guns.

The President. Absolutely.

Ms. Van Susteren. When you talk about guns—besides being the President of the United States, you're a lawyer—do you think that the responsibility when a young child uses a gun and kills another child, that some of the responsibility may be cast in the direction of a parent or another adult? Should we hold them libel?

The President. I think if the custodial adult either knowingly or recklessly leaves a gun where a child can get a hold of it, then I think there should be some liability there. It's outrageous that this 6-year-old boy was able to get that gun. And of course, I think there ought to be child trigger locks on these guns. And I think that we should keep working until we develop the technology which will enable us to make handguns that can only be fired by the adults who own them, which is—it's not that far off.

I mean, the accidental gun death rate in America for children under 15 is 9 times higher than the rate of the next 25 countries combined. So, yes, I do. I think there ought to be some responsibility there, not if there's been a reasonable effort and the child finds a key and gets in a safe or something. But if there is—if it's just total irresponsibility or intentionally leaving a gun in a place where a child could easily get it, I think they should be held responsible.

Ms. Van Susteren. Well, you use the words "knowingly and recklessly," and that standard, it seems to me, is so different. In