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homes safer places in which to live and raise our families.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this tenth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 12, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 13.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on Iraq's Compliance With United Nations Security Council Resolutions

April 10, 2000

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102–1), and as part of my effort to keep the Congress fully informed, I am reporting on the status of efforts to obtain Iraq's compliance with the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council. My last report, consistent with Public Law 102–1, was dated January 7, 2000. I shall continue to keep the Congress informed about this important issue.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Remarks at a Maryland State Bill Signing Ceremony in Annapolis, Maryland

April 11, 2000

Thank you very much, Governor and Mrs. Glendening, Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Secretary of State Willis, Attorney General Curran, Mr. Speaker, President Miller. I also want to acknowledge the Members of Congress who are here, who are on the right side of this fight, Senator Mikulski, Representative Morella, and Representative Wynn. You can be very proud of what all three of them are doing on this issue.

I thank the members of the legislature, the overwhelming numbers of Democrats and the brave Republicans who joined you to pass this legislation. I thank the students from the Young Kids Against Violence and the Students Together Against Guns and from Largo and Potomac schools for their work. And I want to say a little more about each of you in a moment.

Let me say, I think it is fitting that we are here today in this magnificent old place where our forebears walked the halls more than 200 years ago. It's a site of firsts. The Speaker mentioned George Washington resigning his commission just a few steps from here. The State House was also the site of the ratification of the Treaty of Paris, which officially put an end to the Revolutionary War and marked the birth of our new Nation.

Today we are trying to end another kind of war, an ongoing struggle to reduce the staggering toll of violence on our citizens and especially on our children. The Maryland Legislature once again has made history, and I just want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. I came up here today more than anything else to say thank you.

I applaud first your Governor. I remember after I first met him—you know, he's sort of low-key; you have to keep listening to Parris Glendening. [*Laughter*] But I must say, he wears well. The more I watched him—I remember once, a couple years ago, I was talking to people at the White House about what was going on in the States about a completely different issue. And I said, "You know, it is astonishing; in almost everything I have tried to accomplish as President, Maryland has been out there on the forefront of change, ahead of the other States in virtually every area." And I might say, in the area of gun safety, it's worth pointing out for the record that Maryland has already banned assault weapons, cheap handguns known as Saturday night specials, already limited handgun sales to one per month, and with this new law, you are again leading the way.

Last year California passed legislation to limit handgun sales to one a month, to ban

junk guns, new generations of assault weapons. Last week Massachusetts began enforcing consumer product safety rules for guns, to ban junk guns, and to adopt devices to prevent children from firing guns.

Tomorrow I'm going to Colorado to support a citizen ballot initiative to close the gun show loophole and require background checks on all gun sales.

We ought to talk for a moment about how this came to be. I was looking at Mike Miller up here, and I've had the privilege to know him well for many years now. I know what kind of district you represent; this can't have been an easy fight for him. I heard the Speaker talking. I used to go down to the Eastern Shore when I was a student at Georgetown. I've had the privilege of spending a little time at Camp David since I've been President, traveling in the neighborhood. I know not all of Maryland is Baltimore, and I know what the Speaker was saying. I know how hard this vote was for a lot of you.

And I know something else, too. None of us want to really pay tribute to the people who are truly responsible for us all being here today. We thanked each other. The truth is, we're all here because too many children got killed. And I was so moved by what Kathleen said, and I couldn't help thinking how proud her father would be of her today.

Most of the history of the United States to bring sanity to our gun laws has been a sad history, littered with the lost lives of people we could ill afford to lose. President Johnson, to his everlasting credit, proposed sweeping gun legislation in the aftermath of the deaths of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. He got something passed the Congress in 1968, which was better than nothing but woefully weak. I will remind you that that law only required gun sellers to ask but not to verify whether purchasers had a criminal record or a mental health history.

And then, somehow, we just forgot about it. And a lot of people like me who came from places like Arkansas and Maryland, who always knew we ought to be doing something, just didn't. I remember in 1982, when I ran for Governor, I actually blurted out what I thought. I said I would support a waiting period and background checks for gun sales, handgun sales, 18 years ago. It sparked a withering firestorm. And when I got elected, I saw there was no support for it. So I just walked away and went on to other things.

My life was changed when a friend of mine who ran a hardware store in a small mountain town of about a thousand people—a man, I knew him and his family very well—was in his store one day, and a guy came in he hadn't seen in a long time, and he said, "Where you been?" And he said, "Well, I went away to the service, and then I lived in other States, and I just got back. I want to buy a gun. I want to do some target practice." And he kind of joked about the gun control form, "Well, have you ever been in prison, ever had a background check, a mental health history?" And the guy said, "No, no." He handed him the gun; 18 hours later 5 people were dead. He had broken out of the State veterans mental hospital that morning.

And it nearly destroyed my friend. He lost years of his life trying to get over what had happened. He was not responsible. The law, in any case, would not have found out what had to be found out. It was totally inadequate. But he lived with the nightmares of those people.

And then the NRA started trying to pass legislation all over the country to actually require States to keep cities from having gun control laws more stringent than the State did, and I vetoed it a couple of times—and had some rather interesting exchanges with them.

Then, when the Brady bill was vetoed in 1991 or '92, whenever it was, I just promised myself if I ever had a chance to start again, I would. And unfortunately, our cause has been aided by the deaths of all these children in all these schools and in other settings. And I think we should pay tribute to them. They are why we're all here today. You know it, and I know it. They are what made our constituents in places like rural Arkansas and rural Maryland—who now know, because of the experience of the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban, we have no intention of interfering with hunting season or sport shooting events or any other lawful activities—they made those folks willing to say, "You know, this is something we probably ought to do."

And now, in truth, the people are ahead of most of the politicians. And what I would hope today is that we could just keep on. We could make it clear that we have no intention of undermining the legitimate interests of people who hunt and sport shoot. We can also make it clear, to go back to what one of the previous speakers said, that we think the NRA ought to join us in this. What possible interest could anyone have in being against child trigger locks or being for safe gun technology that would permit handguns to be fired only by the adults who own them?

There is a need, as they say, for more training of people, for more sensible education to make sure that responsible conduct is the rule for people who do lawfully own these guns. And it's time for us to get together.

There's just one other thing I would like to say. The Governor talked about the terrible toll of deliberate killing, handgun killing, and how the—if my math is right—the death rate is roughly 30 times in America what it was in the other countries that he mentioned. I think it's worth also mentioning that the accidental death rate of children from handguns is over 9 times that of the next 25 biggest industrial countries combined. And this is something else that's worth pointing out. We are here not just to prevent crimes; we are here to prevent accidents that also, tragically, take the lives of these children.

I hope that the United States Congress is paying attention to this event today, because every child in America deserves the protection you have given Maryland's children, and only Congress can provide that. There are very few people in Congress who represent districts any tougher, any more resistant to the argument that will be made against such legislation than some of you do who are sitting here, very few.

There are more than enough people in the Congress who represent districts who would support this kind of action by more than 2 to 1, to pass this legislation in a landslide, legislation to require child safety locks, to ban the importation of large capacity ammunition clips, to close the gun show loophole. But for 9 months now, there has been no action. Oh, a good bill passed the Senate, as the Governor said, because the Vice President broke the tie. And a weaker bill passed the House, and we have been in conference. And the Democrats, through Congressman Conyers, have even offered a reasonable compromise. But nothing has happened.

And I'll say again, every single day Congress waits, we lose 12 children, nearly 90 people overall, to gun violence. Congress should follow Maryland's lead.

Since the passage of the Brady bill, half a million felons, fugitives, and stalkers have been unable to get handguns at gun stores; gun crime is down by more than 35 percent. The people who opposed closing the gun show loophole 6 years ago said the Brady bill would be ineffective because criminals didn't buy guns at gun stores; they only bought guns at gun shows and urban flea markets. Now they say, well, even if that's true—which it wasn't entirely true—it's just too burdensome.

But it isn't. It isn't. The modest amount of time that would be required at rural gun shows in the most isolated area where people drive the longest distances are more than worth it to save one child's life. Over 70 percent of these background checks can be done in about an hour; over 90 percent, in a day. People say, "Well, why are you holding out for the other 8 or 9 percent?" Because the rejection rate of the 8 or 9 percent that can't be checked in a day is 20 times higher than the rejection rate of the 90 percent that can be checked in a day.

So I say to you, we have got to do this. Do we need more enforcement? Of course, we do. We've increased enforcement, and I've asked for 500 new ATF agents and 1,000 new Federal, State, and local gun prosecutors.

You mentioned the Smith & Wesson announcement where they agreed to change the way guns are manufactured, marketed, and sold. I hope that did help you. It was a courageous thing for Smith & Wesson to do. And let me just explain the practical issue here again. An enormous number of the guns used in crimes that are bought from stores are bought from a very small percentage of

the stores. That's what this is about, primarily. And I only hope that other gun manufacturers will follow their lead instead of excoriating them. They don't deserve to be condemned; they deserve to be applauded. And others ought to step up to the plate and do the same thing.

Now, Governor, you said the NRA ought to stop attacking me. I'll tell you what, if they stop attacking this legislation, I'd be happy for them to attack me for the rest of my life. I've kind of gotten used to it. What we say about each other doesn't amount to a hill of beans. But whether all these kids here live to have their children standing on these steps some day fighting for some other issue, that's what matters. That's what matters.

So again, I say a simple thank you. Thank you, once again, for leading the Nation to a better tomorrow. And again I say, Washington should follow Maryland's lead.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:04 p.m. in the Maryland State House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Parris N. Glendening, Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Secretary of State John Willis, and Attorney General Joseph Curran of Maryland; Governor Glendening's wife, Frances; and Maryland State House Speaker Casper R. Taylor, Jr., and Senate President Mike Miller. The Maryland law was entitled, "The Responsible Gun Safety Act of 2000."

Statement on Permanent Normal Trade Relations Status for China

April 11, 2000

Today I met with my national security team about the critical stakes in China's WTO accession and our decision regarding permanent normal trade relations.

The economic reasons for PNTR are clearcut. Our markets already are open to China; the agreement we reached to bring China into the WTO doesn't require that we open them further in any way. What it does is to open China's markets to our workers, our farmers, our businesses. That means more jobs, growth, and exports for Americans. China will join the WTO regardless of what we decide to do. The decision before Congress is whether the United States will receive the same trade benefits from China as will our trade competitors.

The national security implications are even more far-reaching. Bringing China into the WTO will entwine China in the global economy, increasing its interdependence with the rest of the world. It will bring the information revolution—with the knowledge and freedom of thought that entails—to millions of people in China in ways its Government cannot possibly control. It will accelerate the dismantling of China's state-owned enterprises—a process that is getting government out of people's lives and sparking social and political change all over China. It will strengthen China's reforms and the reformers behind them.

That is reason enough to vote for PNTR. But I am also concerned about what a vote against PNTR would do. It would have extremely harmful consequences for our national security. Because the economic case for PNTR is so strong, the Chinese will see a rejection as a strategic decision by the United States to turn from cooperation to confrontation, to deal with China as an adversary. That would undercut the reform-minded leaders who signed this agreement with us and strengthen the hand of hardliners who believe cooperating with the United States is a mistake. Those are the same forces most threatened by our alliances with Japan and Korea, the same forces that want the Chinese military to sell dangerous technologies, and the same forces that would pursue confrontation with Taiwan rather than dialog.

It's no surprise that Taiwan's President-elect Chen strongly supports China's membership in the WTO and wants us to grant PNTR. He understands the importance of the stability that will come from good U.S.-China relations and China's membership in the WTO. If both Beijing and Taiwan are in the WTO, it will increase their interdependence and, therefore, the cost to Beijing of confrontation. If China is shut out, tensions in the Taiwan Strait will likely rise. Our ability to ease them will diminish.

We will spare no effort in the coming days and weeks to make sure that the Congress and the American people understand what the stakes are. And I am confident that when the debate is over and the votes are cast, the