

and a lot of people remembering when I showed up at your chicken supper or this, that, or the other thing. And I care a lot about that. But I know this district. They're mostly just hard-working, small business people, factory workers, farmers, people doing their best to obey the law, keep body and soul together, and figure out how to live together.

The district is about a third African-American. It is a beautiful, wonderful place. It deserves to have a wonderful Congressman. If you can give him some more money for the election, you ought to do it. If you can't, you ought to call somebody down there or go home and work. I'm telling you, clarity is our friend. If the people know what the choice really means for them in their lives, he will win this thing in a walk. But he's not going to win it in a walk, because they've got a lot of money for—[inaudible]—but we've got to go down and fight for clarity for 56 more days. He's been out here for 15 months. The rest of us ought to do whatever we can for him for 56 days.

Thank you very much. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to reception hosts Thomas F. (Mack) and Donna Kay McLarty; former Senator Dale Bumpers; and Republican Presidential candidate Gov. George W. Bush. Mike Ross is a candidate for Congress in Arkansas' Fourth Congressional District.

Remarks on the Legislative Agenda on Hate Crimes

September 13, 2000

Mr. Holder, thank you for your leadership. Commander O'Malley, thank you for coming back and for being the embodiment of someone who has changed his position on this and been courageous enough to say so.

And Mrs. Byrdsong, I cannot even imagine the courage it must take for you to have made this journey from your home, to stand up in front of us, to say what you have said. I thank your pastor for joining you here. And I think I speak for all of us and for all Americans: We thank you for trying to turn your pain into a positive gain for America. We thank you.

I'd like to thank Justin Dart and Mary Frances Berry and so many other advocates of human rights and civil rights for being in this room today. I would like to thank the members of the Interfaith Alliance who are here and, of course, the members of our DC city council.

Many Members of Congress wanted to be here, but they are actually voting now, and in the House they're voting on this, on amendments to this very proposal. So we're here at a very important time. The first-ever vote on comprehensive hate crimes legislation is scheduled in the House of Representatives for later today after the amendments have been dealt with. That would enable us to clear the last legislative hurdle to final passage of hate crimes.

In June, with the Vice President standing watch in case a tie had to be broken, the Senate passed a strong bipartisan hate crimes bill. I was very moved by many of the things that were said there, but I want to say a special words of thanks publicly to Senator Gordon Smith from Oregon, an evangelical Christian Republican, for the speech that he gave on that occasion, reminding us that this is not a partisan issue. I hope the House will follow suit.

As I have said many times over the last couple of years, it is for me a sad and painful irony that at the beginning of a new century I have done so much to try to fill with opportunity for the American people and to bring full of hope to the rest of the world, with all the modern gadgets we enjoy, we are still bedeviled by mankind's oldest failing, the fear of the other, which so quickly can lead to distrust, then to dehumanization, then to the kind of violence that ended the lives of Matthew Shepard and Ricky Byrdsong far, far before their time.

We may not ever fully conquer the disease that seems to afflict human hearts everywhere, the compelling need to define ourselves up by defining someone else down. But at least we can do more to make sure that no one in our country is violated simply because of who they are. That's why we're here today. I would also like to point out that there is a connection between the two ways that throughout history, and if you just look

at the last century, hate crimes have manifested themselves.

Here we talk about sad people, twisted inside, who somehow felt they could fill a hole in their own lives by taking the lives of other people away, people who had somehow been convinced that they were so superior to other people, they could shoot at them, kill them. What possessed that person in California to shoot at all those little kids walking into the Jewish community school?

I saw—one person said that when he killed a Filipino postal worker, he thought he had a double success; he'd killed an Asian and a Federal employee. What makes people think that way? There are all kinds of explanations, but we know that it's profoundly wrong to believe that you can ever lift yourself up by putting someone else down.

The point I want to make, just briefly, is that it's not very far from there to the awful examples we've seen in our time of political leaders who try to get one group of people in the majority in the country to blame all their problems on another group of people in the minority. And then you have a Holocaust, or you have a Kosovo, where a whole country is just flushed out.

So this is very important. It is just not true that hate crimes are like other crimes. It is not even true that every crime is a hate crime. And that is fundamentally at the heart of this debate.

We had the first-ever conference at the White House on this 3 years ago. Since then, we've increased the number of Federal agents working on these cases, prosecuted successfully a number of quite serious ones, formed local hate crimes groups with local U.S. attorneys' offices around the Nation, and worked with more and more police officers to identify the signs of hate crimes.

This coming year, one of the things in our budget I hope the Congress will adopt involves funds for extensive training for local law enforcement officials in this area. But we have to do more. The Deputy Attorney General told you quite eloquently, precisely, and clearly why we need a Federal hate crimes law that allows the Justice Department to do so much more than it can now. Commander O'Malley told you the devastating financial consequences that can come to local law en-

forcement from simply trying to do the right thing without the necessary Federal support.

But underneath it all, and far more important than everything else, are the stories: the life young Matthew Shepard had and the one he might have had; the wonderful life Ricky Byrdsong had and the one he might have had. Last year, or in 1998—that's the last year we have figures—there were—listen to this—7,755 reported hate crimes, nearly one every hour of every day.

More importantly, we know this is only the tip of the iceberg. Today we have new evidence that confirms what many have long suspected, and that is that hate crimes are under-reported. A survey conducted by Northeastern University found that as many as 6,000 law enforcement agencies may have encountered hate crimes over the past year but failed to report them to the FBI.

We also learned that 85 percent of law enforcement officers responding to the survey agree with Commander O'Malley's belief that hate crimes—hate-motivated crimes are more serious than similar crimes not motivated by bias.

That's why I'm directing the Justice Department today to work with local authorities to develop a plan within 120 days to make sure we report all hate crimes so we'll know what the scope of the challenge is. It will examine a number of strategies, from pilot programs in States suspected of under-reporting, to increasing training to help local officials identify such crimes.

This is all very important, but only Congress can do what really should be done here. That's why the House must vote yes on the hate crimes legislation offered by Congressman Conyers today, and yes on sending me the final hate crimes legislation before they adjourn for the year. Both yeses are important. *[Applause]* Thank you.

I also ask Congress to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act before it's too late, so that we can continue to build on its success.

You know, over the last several decades, over and over again, when it came down to protecting the lives of innocent Americans, Congress has been willing to take bipartisan action to do the right thing. I hope and believe it will do nothing less with hate crimes

legislation and the Violence Against Women Act.

Let me just close with this. One of the cruelest aspects of the systematic hate crimes that were perpetrated by the Nazis is their attempt to prove that somehow it was justified by science, by some sort of innate superiority. One of the happiest aspects of most recent scientific developments in biology is that we can now scientifically confirm what faiths have always taught, that the most important fact of our common existence on this Earth is our common humanity.

The human genome research project has documented that we are genetically 99.9 percent the same. Furthermore, that the differences among people within the same ethnic or racial groups are greater than the genetic differences between profiles of different racial groups.

Now, this is a stunning thing. In other words, this is not an affair of the body. It is an affair of the heart, of the spirit. It is, therefore, an even more dangerous kind of infection. I don't think any of us believe we can ever root it out just by punishing people. But the most important thing is that we do have the tools we need to take a strong stand before these things spread even wider. That's what Sherialyn said, and that's why she came.

We've got a chance here to reaffirm America at its best. And I hope we can do it, because the most important thing, if we want to make the most of all this modern, wondrous economy we have, is to get rid of our oldest demons and build one America.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:48 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Commander David O'Malley, Laramie Police Department, WY, who investigated the murder of Matthew Shepard; Sherialyn Byrdsong, widow of Ricky Byrdsong; Justin Dart, Jr., chairman and founder, Justice For All; and Rev. David S. Handley, senior pastor, First Presbyterian Church of Evanston, IL.

Statement on the Need for Congressional Action on the COPS Program

September 13, 2000

Six years ago today I signed the historic 1994 crime bill into law with a vision of bringing communities and local law enforcement together to take back our streets and win the war against crime. Since enactment of this vital law, crime has dropped every year to its lowest level in over 25 years, and America is the safest it has been in a generation. One of the most important factors in our success is the Community Oriented Policing Service (COPS) program, which has funded over 105,000 police officers for our streets. Today Attorney General Janet Reno will release a report to Congress on the positive impact the COPS program has had on communities of all sizes and regions across America. By building partnerships and trust with residents, COPS officers are not only helping reduce crime but the fear of crime, as well, restoring hope and promise for the future in neighborhoods across America.

The Attorney General will also announce over \$55 million in community policing grants to more than 700 communities to hire or redeploy of over 1,600 police officers, to develop 311 non-emergency hotline programs, and to install cameras in over 2,900 law enforcement vehicles to improve officer safety and promote officer integrity. Although the COPS program continues to make progress by giving communities the tools they need to fight crime, we must do more. I urge Congress to make the 21st century the safest yet by reauthorizing the COPS program for another 5 years and fully funding my \$1.3 billion budget request to help put up to an additional 50,000 officers on the street and provide law enforcement and communities with more resources than ever to keep American families safe. Together, we can make America the safest big country in the world.