

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks on Crime Prevention Efforts and an Exchange With Reporters
February 28, 2024

The President. Good job, man. [Applause] Chief White, thank you for that introduction.

And you know, every day, you and your fellow officers put on that shield, walk out the door, and your families worry about receiving that phone call. But thank you for your service and, I mean this sincerely, your sacrifice and the sacrifice of that of your family. It's not just you—your families as well.

And thanks to the law enforcement and community leaders here today who have helped bring down violent crime rates in their cities to historic lows.

That's right. We're about to talk about what's going to happen now. You know, you just heard from the chief, and they salute these cities who are making historic progress here.

Last year, the United States had one of the lowest rates of all violent crime—of all violent crimes in more than 50 years. Murder, rape, aggravated assault, robbery all dropped sharply, along with burglary, property crime, and theft. And it matters.

As President, public safety and crime reduction is a top priority for my administration and for me. And it has been for a long time, back when I was chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

You know, since day one, my administration has been working with law enforcement, mayors, and community leaders to do what we know works to keep people and communities safe.

As was referenced, during the pandemic, States and cities saw violent crime rising, and their budgets were strained as they faced deep cuts in law enforcement and public safety. But we stepped up.

Thanks to my American Rescue Plan, which, I might note, not a single person on the other team voted for, we provided \$350 billion—\$350 billion—that was available to deal with these issues. You know, and the fact is that we find ourselves—they could use it to—this money to keep law enforcement on the beat and communities safe from violence.

We invested \$15 billion—\$15 billion—to make their communities safer, and we added billions more in grants to help. The Justice Department invested in law enforcement and community violence-interruption programs. Because of the American Rescue Plan, we have the largest Federal investment of fighting crime and preventing violent crime in any time in our history. And that's a big deal.

You know, we're—we know being in law enforcement is harder than ever. But—and we expect you to be everything to everybody. That's why we've invested in more crisis responders who work alongside police officers—as Chief said, mental health and social workers—to respond to nonviolent crimes as well.

More investments in recruiting, retaining, and training officers. More investments in violence prevention to get guns off the streets. And on top of that, we're hiring more U.S. attorneys, recruiting more U.S. marshals, and investing in more technology and training to clear the court backlogs, solve murders, and deal with apprehending violent fugitives.

And we're also working hard to ensure bonds of trust between officers and the people you all serve. My budget calls for more officers on the street trained in community policing, walking the

beat, working hard hand in hand with community leaders and partners and public—to gain public trust and advance public safety.

The chiefs in this room know that when their communities trust the police, we can solve a hell of a lot more crimes a hell of a lot faster. That's why I signed the historic Executive order to advance executive [effective; White House correction] and accountable community policing, and it's very effective so far. You know, and I'm going to continue to call on Congress to pass the George Floyd Policing and Justice—the Justice in Policing Act so we can make police reform the law of the land.

We've also made historic investments in proven strategies to interrupt and prevent crime and violence in the first place. These programs use trusted messengers, including people who are in the neighborhood, people who have been incarcerated and are released now, people who have been through it, people who know what they're talking about.

And we have a track record of reducing violent crime, as a consequence of that, by 30 to 60 percent where those programs exist.

And finally, my plan goes after the scourge of gun violence in America. I've taken more executive actions to stop the flow of illegal guns than any other administration in history. And we beat the NRA when I signed the most significant gun safety law in nearly 30 years.

And we're going to finish the job. We're going to ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines next time around because it has to be done. I formed the first-ever White House Gun Violence—White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, and I thank Vice President Harris for overseeing this important effort.

I—let me close with this. Our plan is working, but we still have much more to do, as everyone at this table knows. And that's why we're here today.

My administration is going to choose progress over politics, and communities across the country are safer as a result of that policy. There is no greater responsibility than to ensure the safety of families, children, communities, and our Nation.

And with that, I want to turn this over to Neera Tanden, my Domestic Policy Adviser, and we'll get this discussion going. Okay? Thank you.

[At this point, several reporters began asking questions at once.]

Domestic Policy Council Director Neera N. Tanden. Thank you. I would like to invite the press to exit before we start our discussion.

[Several reporters asked questions at once.]

The President. Louder. Louder. Can't hear you.

Director Tanden. I would like—*[laughter]*.

[Several reporters asked questions at once.]

The President's Annual Physical Exam

Q. Mr. President, how did—how did your physical go today? Are you okay? Everything good?

The President. All right. Everything is squared away.

Q. Anything concerning that Americans should know about, about your health?

The President. Well, they think I look too young. *[Laughter]*

Q. They think you look too young? How—

The President. Thank you.

No, there is nothing different than last year.

Q. Everything is great?

The President. Everything is great.

[*Several reporters asked questions at once.*]

Senate Minority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell

Q. What about on McConnell stepping down?

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The President. I'm sorry to see McConnell step down. He and I—trusted him. We've had a great relationship. We fight like hell, but he never, never, never misrepresents anything. I'm sorry to hear of him stepping down.

Thank you.

Q. On your Executive order protecting privacy, how concerned are you for Americans privacy?

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:59 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chief of Police James E. White of Detroit, MI. A reporter referred to Executive Order 14117.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Crime prevention efforts; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Harris, Kamala D.; McConnell, A. Mitchell; Tanden, Neera N.; White, James E.

Subjects: Community policing programs, improvement efforts; Community violence-interruption programs; COVID-19 pandemic; Crime prevention efforts; Crime rates; Domestic Policy Council; Gun violence, prevention efforts; Law enforcement officers, service and dedication; Mental health programs and services; Policing best practices, improvement efforts; Senate minority leader; State and local law enforcement, Federal support; Vice President; White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention.

DCPD Number: DCPD202400140.