

chance to get it done, and I hope that the American people will be supportive. I know they are; that's what they're hearing out there. We've just got to keep on plugging.

Q. Hasn't it become personal, also, Mr. President? Senator Dole thinks he was sandbagged by the Democrats.

The President. Well, I know he thinks that, and I don't want to get into this, because I can't—I mean, he says that, but this has nothing to do with the underlying merits. This is either a good bill or not a good bill, number one. Number two, the Republicans on the conference committee were not even on the regular committee, and they were people who had no intention of voting for the Brady bill if all the changes they wanted were adopted. So the Democrats argued that they felt that they didn't

know what they were supposed to talk about with people who weren't going to vote for it regardless and who weren't even on the committee that had jurisdiction of the Brady bill. So you can hear arguments on both sides about that, but that's irrelevant, that's irrelevant.

This is a good thing for the American people. It's a good first step. It's the right thing to do. If you stay around these battles now, and you've been through all of the stuff we've been through just in the last year, all of us—if you go around letting your personal feelings get in the way of doing the public interest, we'd never get anything done around here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:36 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks at the Covenant Baptist Church November 24, 1993

The President. Thank you. First of all, let me say to you, Pastor, and to the whole staff and family of Covenant Baptist Church, I thank you for taking us in here and letting us be a part of what Hillary and I have always done at Thanksgiving, being a part of some ministry to take Thanksgiving to people who would otherwise not have it. I want to also thank the Coalition for the Homeless that's working with you for the work that they have done to try to turn homelessness into a temporary condition by moving people through shelters into having the skills and the strength and the power to take control of their own lives.

I think it's important that the people of America know, all the people of America know, that in our cities where people have many problems, most of the people who live there are good, God-fearing, law-abiding, hard-working people who are doing things like this to help their friends and neighbors and who want things to work better.

So my commitment to you is to do what I can as President to help you succeed here, in your church and on your streets. And I hope that all Americans on this Thanksgiving, including many Americans like me and Hillary and our family who have more than they could ever

have asked for, will take some time out to work, as you are working, so that other people who don't have so much can also have something to be thankful for on Thanksgiving and throughout the year.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

[At this point, the President and Hillary Clinton were presented with T-shirts.]

The President. Let me say one other thing, Reverend Wiley. I like this church also because you've got a husband and wife team here who are both pastors, both pastors of this church, and making this thing work as a family, along with your distinguished father who preceded you in the pulpit. Reverend Wiley, it's good to see you. And we like to see people working together like this and all of you doing that. I appreciate it and respect it very much. Thank you for your service and your ministry. I'll wear this jogging. Thank you.

Handgun Control Legislation

Q. Mr. President, did you get a deal on the Brady bill?

The President. It looks like the Brady bill is going to be passed any minute, and I am very happy. Right before I left to come over here, it appeared that an agreement could be

reached between Senator Mitchell and Senator Dole to end the Republican filibuster of the Brady bill. I am elated. It is a wonderful Thanksgiving present for the American people. It will enable us nationwide for the first time in history to check people who are trying to buy handguns for their age, for their mental health history, for their criminal history. It will be a beginning in what must be a long and relentless assault on the problems of crime and violence in this country. And we are beginning. It's a great Thanksgiving present, and next year

I look forward to passing the crime bill and to continuing to do this work for as long as I'm in this job. It's very important.

We're going to rebuild the families, the neighborhoods, the communities, the schools, and safety and security, from the grassroots up. This is the first step. I am very happy. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Dennis and Christine Wiley, pastors, Covenant Baptist Church.

Teleconference on the Passage of Handgun Control Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters November 24, 1993

Q. How soon do you think for the signing, Mr. President?

The President. Early next week, I hope. We're working on it.

Q. And what about the compromise? Are you satisfied with the kind of compromise the Republicans want to bring to a vote?

The President. They asked for the right to bring it to a vote and to know that it wouldn't be vetoed if they could pass it. We all agreed, all of us together, that that was acceptable.

Q. Do you think the Republicans were afraid to go home to their districts this weekend without reaching some kind of agreement?

The President. I think the American people would have been real disappointed if Congress had gone home without this bill. And I think they'll be very happy now. It's a great Thanksgiving present.

[At this point, the telephone conversation began.]

The President. Hello, Senator Mitchell, how are you doing? Mr. Speaker?

Senator Mitchell. [Inaudible]

The President. You sure are. I told you last night, see.

Senator Mitchell. [Inaudible]

The President. Well, we are delighted. I am here with the Vice President, Attorney General Reno, and Jim and Sarah Brady in the Oval Office, and we're all happy as can be. And we thank you very much for a wonderful session of Congress and a wonderful ending.

Senator Mitchell. [Inaudible]—back to health care next year.

Speaker Foley. A lot of work to be done next year, Mr. President, we're going to look forward to working with you on.

The President. And we're ready to roll, and we're very grateful to you. You have a good Thanksgiving and a good Christmas.

Speaker Foley. I'd like to put on Bob Michel here just to say a word to you.

Senator Mitchell. And Bob Dole as well—

The President. Please do.

Senator Mitchell. —without whose cooperation we could not have achieved this result today.

Representative Michel. Hi, Mr. President, this is Bob Michel speaking.

The President. Hello, Bob.

Senator Dole. Bob Dole—

The President. Hi, Bob. Thank you both very much.

Senator Dole. Well, we think it was kind of a capstone of the whole session to get the Brady bill behind us. As I indicated yesterday, I thought we could do it if we just hung in there.

The President. Well, it worked out, and all of us are very pleased and very grateful. And I'm especially glad that we're ending this session on two measures where there was substantial bipartisan support for the progress that we're making. And I'm very appreciative of it, grateful to both of you. I hope you have a good holiday.

Senator Dole. Same to you, Mr. President.