

Jan. 29 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1994

company tells the Tarnows, "Until there's a cure for cystic fibrosis, we will not cover your child." As Rick's wife, Tracy, told my wife, "It's devastating enough to learn that your child has a chronic illness and then have to deal with the nightmare of insurance."

Those who say there's no crisis should tell it to the Janetakos family of Woburn, Massachusetts. Twelve years ago, Corrine Janetakos had a stroke, leaving her partially paralyzed. Now she and her husband, who owns a painting business, have trouble getting insurance because of her preexisting condition. She wrote to Hillary because, quote, "It's been very frustrating arguing my dilemma to the numerous insurance companies that we've applied to for coverage."

Well, with our approach it will be illegal for companies to deny anyone coverage for any reason, and every family will have comprehensive benefits that can never be taken away. The Tarnow family, the Janetakos family, and millions of other Americans live every day with the health care crisis. It's time we stopped denying there's a crisis and started fixing it.

Now is the time to debate and decide America's real agenda: health care, crime, jobs and skills, welfare reform, more hope for our young people. The debate is between those who don't even understand how you live and those who understand the urgency of change, between those who don't even see these problems and those who are working to solve them, between those who are comfortable with deadlock and drift and those who call for continuing the American journey of progress and renewal. If you raise your voice, the forces of change will prevail.

With your help, I'll keep speaking out for reforming health care, fighting crime, ending welfare as we know it, and improving our skills, our schools, and our future. And I'll try not to shout myself hoarse tomorrow on Super Bowl Sunday.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Letter Accepting the Resignation of Philip B. Heymann as Deputy Attorney General

January 29, 1994

Dear Phil:

It is with deep regret that I accept your resignation as Deputy Attorney General, effective upon the availability of a successor.

You brought a most impressive history of service to the Department of Justice and distinguished yourself at every turn. During your time as Deputy Attorney General, you consistently demonstrated intelligence, integrity, sound judgment, and an unyielding commitment to the cause of justice.

I am very grateful for all of your many contributions to my Administration and our nation. I wish you the very best as you return to your academic career at Harvard Law School.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON

NOTE: This letter was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary but was not issued as a White House press release.

Remarks to the National Governors' Association

January 31, 1994

I want to thank you all again for coming. Since we're running a bit late, I want to be brief and get on to hearing from Governor

Campbell and Governor Dean. The primary thing that I was hoping we could talk about in this morning's session is the crime bill.

I wanted to emphasize that I am very aware that this is an issue that historically has been dealt with primarily at the local and State level, one that I spent an enormous amount of time on as a Governor and as attorney general.

There are things that I think should be and indeed almost have to be done at the national level. We passed the Brady bill at the end of the last session of Congress, which I think was a very important thing. And many of you were helpful in that regard, and I appreciate that. We have a number of grants to cities and communities to help with law enforcement, and we had enormous application, actually a terrific surplus of applications for the Attorney General's discretionary funds on community policing. This summer—Eli Segal is here—our summer of service program, as part of the national service this summer, will be called the summer of safety. And we hope thousands of our young people will be out there working with law enforcement people all across the country.

I really appreciate a lot of the things that all of you have done in this regard. Let me just say that the crime bill itself has a number of provisions that I think are quite important and some with which you may or may not agree. Two things that I feel very strongly about are the community policing provisions and the “three strikes and you’re out” provision. I’d like to say something about each of them.

One, we know that there’s been a dramatic reversal in the ratio of police officers to crime in the last 35 years. Thirty-five years ago, there were three police officers for every serious crime reported. Today, there are three crimes for every police officer, particularly in the high crime areas of the country. We have ample evidence that community policing actually works to reduce crime by having people on the block who are well-trained and know the people who live there. Dr. Lee Brown, our Director of Drug Policy, instituted community policing programs in major cities all across this country and can speak to that. The mayors were here last week. They were exceedingly enthusiastic about that provision, and we’re looking forward to working with them and with you about it.

The second thing I’d like to say about stiffening the penalties is I know many of you have included versions of the “three strikes and you’re out” in your own legislative programs. I believe Washington State even had a referendum on the issue. I would just like to urge

that we be both tough and smart on this issue. We know that a small number of people commit a significant number of the truly violent crimes and are highly likely to be repeat offenders. If, therefore, this law is drawn properly, it will affect a small percentage of the prison population at the Federal level and a somewhat larger percentage at the State level. But you actually will be keeping people in prison who will be overwhelmingly likely to commit a serious violent crime if they get out.

I think it is important not to make these provisions too overbroad to undermine the flexibility that people at the State and at the local level need to run their criminal justice systems and, at the same time, to keep people off the street who are involved in crimes like the terrible tragedy involving Polly Klaas.

So I want to invite you not only to do whatever you were doing at the State level but to be involved with us here as we work through this crime bill to make sure that it is well-drawn, well-drafted, and achieves the objectives it is designed to achieve.

The third thing I’d like to say is there are a number of other things in the crime bill which I think are worthy of your attention. There’s the provision which bans possession of handguns by minors except in limited circumstances, which many of you have already done at the State level. There is the ban on several assault weapons. There are funds for alternative incarceration, like boot camps, and for drug treatment. And of course, there are significant funds, which I heard you all discussing yesterday in the committee chaired by Governor Wilson, about jails and Federal funds for jails. I heard the discussion on television yesterday. I think you need to have a committee that works with us on it to make sure that it makes sense to you. Many times I think things come up in the context of crime here in Washington which sound good here but which may or may not make sense out there on the front lines of the fight against crime. So I want to invite you all to be a part of that.

Just one other thing I’d like to say. In addition to the focus on the crime bill this morning, I’m obviously open to any questions or comments you want to have about the other areas of our partnership, on welfare reform, health care reform, what we’re going to do on the budget, which will be a very tough budget, difficult for us, difficult for you. And Mr. Panetta

is here. We have tried to be good partners. We've granted 5 comprehensive health care waivers, 90 smaller waivers in the health care area, 7 welfare reform waivers already. We have tried to make good on our commitment to push through a new partnership with the States. And I think that you will find that we'll continue to do that and we're eager to do it.

But the first major thing that will happen in this legislative session is, in closing, the crime bill. After we pass the education bills—I think that Secretary Riley is in pretty good shape with Goals 2000 and the school-to-work transition. But then the next thing that will come up is the crime bill. Then we'll go to the other meas-

ures I mentioned. And I really look forward to working with you on them.

I ask you for your help. I asked the mayors, and I will ask you to put together a bipartisan committee to come up here to work with us, to be willing to lobby with us, and to help us pass a bill that is tough and smart.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:03 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Governors Carroll A. Campbell, Jr., of South Carolina, Howard Dean of Vermont, and Pete Wilson of California.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany

January 31, 1994

Interest Rates

Q. Mr. President, do you agree with Chairman Greenspan's comments this morning that interest rates need to be raised to get ahead of inflation?

The President. Well, I agree that there's no evidence that inflation is coming back into the economy. There is still a kind of a gap between short- and long-term rates, so it may be that—if they make that decision on short-term rates, what I hope is that it won't raise long-term rates, because there's no need to do it. And I hope that the stock market won't take an adverse view because we've still got good, strong growth in this economy.

But we want to manage it with real discipline, that is we don't want to have one of these roller coaster things. We want the economy to grow in a very stable, solid way. And obviously, low interest rates are critical to that. I consider that part of the kind of compact we've all made where we'll continue to reduce the deficit, and we've got to keep inflation down and interest rates down so that people can afford to borrow money and invest.

Northern Ireland

Q. How does letting Gerry Adams into the U.S. advance the cause of peace?

The President. Well, we hope it will advance the cause of peace. You know, that's a very thorny problem. But his comments over the last several days on the questions of violence and the joint declaration, I thought, justified not a general visa but a very narrow visa for the purpose of coming to this conference in the hope that it will advance the peace process. Ultimately, of course, that's an issue that's going to have to be worked out by the parties themselves, as all these matters do. But I thought it was the appropriate thing to do for those reasons, because of what he said and because he's in a position, I think, to push this process forward.

White House Press Corps

Q. Have you been sneaking out on us?

The President. No. I was amazed when I read that. We tried to remember if that happened. I don't think so. George and I couldn't think of a time.

Q. You're always willing to take us with you?

The President. You know, once I went running when the press had gone home, but I think they found me before it was over. And then when I was home for my mother's funeral, I went out in the town there and went to my old high school, but the press found me. I don't think we have. We were trying to think of—