

Would you call upon them to at least sit down and have some talks?

Q. And don't go away, Mr. President. [Laughter]

The President. I've got to go away, because I've got to get back on the phone. If I don't—I'll have lots to talk to you about if we pass the rule today, but if I don't make some more calls, then I'll always wonder.

Let me make one comment about the baseball strike. First of all, I think that you should know that since the Secretary of Labor first contacted both sides, we have been in continuous contact with both sides and have done what we could to make some constructive suggestions about how to avoid the strike. It appears that both parties are determined to let the strike proceed. We will do what we can to be of help and to get things back on track if there is anything we can do.

Today I would like to speak on behalf of the country because this is an unusual situation. You know, when a company goes on strike, the right to strike is protected and the workers go

on strike because they and the management can't reach agreement. But they always have to consider in the end their customers and what will happen if they lose their customers. In a great event like the baseball strike, I think there's an assumption that the customers are always there. But the only thing I'd like to say to both sides is that there are a lot of little kids out there who don't want to see this season come to a close. And there are a lot of not-so-little kids out there who know it's the most exciting baseball season in 40 years.

And I hope that in the days ahead they will search for a way to get back together, finish this season, extend it by a few days so that all the games can be played, and the feelings of the American people that this could be one of those seasons that occurs once every four or five decades could be vindicated. I think the people really ought to be taken into consideration here, and I hope they will be.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters on Anticrime Legislation

August 11, 1994

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, under any circumstances I would be disappointed if the House of Representatives turned its back on the toughest and largest attack on crime in the history of our country, at a time when the American people say it is the most important issue to them. But it is especially disheartening to see 225 Members of the House participate in a procedural trick orchestrated by the National Rifle Association, then heavily, heavily pushed by the Republican leadership in the House, and designed with only one thing in mind, to put the protection of particular interests over the protection of ordinary Americans.

I don't know how many people in the run up to this vote—of both parties, unfortunately—told me, "I'll vote for that bill, but I just have to vote against this procedural bill." "Oh, I'll vote for it if it ever gets to the floor, but I just have to vote against this rule," because of the assault weapons ban or because they had decided, many of them after the fact, that there

was too much money in here for preventing crime and to give our children something to say yes to instead of something just to say no to, even though two-thirds of this money is for police and prisons and punishment.

Well, tonight a majority of the House attempted to take the easy way out. But they have failed the American people. And now I say to them, the easy way out is not an option. Fear and violence, especially among our children, will still be there tonight when they go home to bed. So I want them to come back tomorrow and the day after that and the day after that and to keep coming back until we give the American people the essential elements of this crime bill, until we put 100,000 police on the street and take our children and the guns off the street with the assault weapons ban and with the ban on ownership of handguns by juveniles, until we make "three strikes and you're out" the law of the land.

We have got to do these things. And yes, we have to both build more prisons and give our kids something to say yes to, not just something to say no to. The amazing thing is that this prevention money was supported by every major law enforcement organization in the United States, representing over a half a million police officers who know something about fighting crime and putting their lives on the line.

Today's vote is a vote against all of them, those people in law enforcement who stand out day-in and day-out and try to make our streets safer. It's a vote against their organizations who pleaded for this bill, the sheriffs, the police chiefs, the prosecutors, the attorneys general, a vote against the teachers and the others who work to keep our kids safe and secure, a vote against the Democratic mayor of Chicago and the Republican mayors of New York and Los Angeles. It's a vote against the families of children like James Darby and Polly Klaas who have been killed.

Now, we can do better than this. And I want the Congress and the House to go back to work tomorrow and figure out how to save the elements of this crime bill. This is about the American people. It is their number one concern. And the American people are not foolish enough to be conned into believing that people are really for doing something about crime, but they had to pull a political trick to keep the bill from being voted on.

Q. Mr. President, where do you go from here? Some of the main supporters of the bill say it's dead.

The President. Oh, I don't think so. But of course, that's what we were all worried about. We were afraid that this would be like Humpty Dumpty, you know. And of course, that's what they want, the people that are fighting against it. But they're going to be given a chance.

You know, for the last few days, all they heard from were the special interests and people that had been stirred up by a lot of the disinformation that had been put out. But tonight I think they've got a lot of explaining to do, because we know—you all know—that there were a majority of votes in the House for this, and the bill still went down on the rule because they thought they could pull a political trick and satisfy particular pressures on them without aggravating the rank-and-file citizens of this country. I think they're wrong. I think the people will figure it out.

Q. But there were 58 Democrats, Mr. President—

Q. Mr. President, are you saying that you will keep the Congress in session until this is done? Are you going to keep the Congress in session?

The President. I don't think they ought to go home. You know, the people who are committing these crimes are not going to take a vacation. They're going to be out there working overtime.

Q. Mr. President, there were 58 Democrats, including 10 members of the Black Caucus, one Republican member of the Black Caucus. What do you say to them? They went against you on this issue.

The President. Well, I say first of all let's look at the whole thing. There were 20 fewer Democrats voting against the rule than those who voted against the assault weapons ban. So there were 20 Democrats, probably 30, who said, "Okay, I lost that fight. But the safety of the people in my district is more important than my view on this particular issue and certainly more important than my killing this bill on a procedural vote." They were very brave. They stood up and took a lot of heat.

Now, there were 10 members of the Black Caucus whose opposition to the death penalty was so strong that they could not overcome their personal opposition. At least they had a principled position. But almost 3 times that many, including many who were disappointed because they didn't get what they wanted in that bill, still voted for it.

There were 11 brave Republicans who weathered enormous pressure. But there were 38 who voted against the assault weapons ban, and there were 65—65—who voted for the crime bill with about the same amount of prevention money in it when it passed as it has today. Now I hear them say, "Well, there's just too much prevention money here. We're doing too much in these programs to help these kids who are in trouble." Well, all I know is when it passed the first time at about this same dollar amount, there were 65 Republican votes for it. But I can tell you, they were put under a lot of pressure.

Now, they can figure out how to do this. I'm not in the Congress; I'm not a part of it. But they can figure out how to get this done. They know what the elements are. There is a majority now in both Houses for all of the ele-

ments of this crime bill. To let special interests use parliamentary maneuvers to undermine what is clearly the will of the majority of the American people and a majority of the Congress on each discreet element is a bad mistake, and I don't think the people will forget about it.

Q. Mr. President—

Q. Mr. President—

The President. One at a time. One at a time. Wolf [Wolf Blitzer, Cable News Network].

Q. Mr. President, on the issue of the specific complaints that the opposition made, that there was too much money—pork, if you will, they claim—on crime prevention and the ban on 19 kinds of assault weapons, are you prepared to compromise on those two points, the crime prevention programs and the gun control, in order to get the more prisons, the 100,000 police, and everything else you want?

The President. First of all, I believe that all of these elements can pass, and I believe that they will. Let's wait and see what they have to say. There were—let me say again—there were 11 votes, Republican votes, for this rule today. There were 38 Republican votes for the assault weapons ban. There were 65 Republican votes for the crime bill with about the same dollars' worth of prevention programs we had. So I don't see how, when we're spending two-thirds of the money in this bill on prisons, police, and punishment, we can possibly walk away when we've got the toughest punishment that any Federal bill ever had—"three strikes and you're out," tougher penalties for serious offenders, tougher penalties for serious juvenile offenders—how we can walk away from the pre-

vention programs when the police have told us that that's what we have to do?

Q. What's your response to those who will say that this is an enormous personal defeat for you?

The President. I can say that I worked my heart out on it, and I did everything I could. And on this day, the NRA and the Republican leadership had their way. The American people have to decide whether they think this is about which politicians are winning and losing in Washington or about kids like James Darby and Polly Klaas who are still alive.

I believe the American people will not like viewing this as some sort of political circus up here. I'm on their side, and I think we better see who's on what side. That is the only thing that matters, what happens to the American people.

Did I lose tonight? You bet I did in the sense that I wanted it to pass. But what happens to me is not important. If everybody in America had the security I had, we wouldn't need a crime bill.

Look at—what happens to me is not it. What matters is all these kids that are going to be out on the street tonight that could just get shot. That's what's important. And I think that in the end if that is felt in the heart of the Members of the House, we'll still get this crime bill.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:15 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House.

Remarks on Anticrime Legislation August 12, 1994

Ladies and gentlemen, last night when 225 Members of Congress voted with the NRA and the Republican congressional leadership, under enormous pressure, they decided that their political security was more important than the personal security of the American people. They said no to 100,000 police on the street, no to getting guns and kids off the street, no to protecting our police forces and our citizens against gangs with assault weapons, no to giving our kids some things to say yes to as well as something to

say no to, no to "three strikes and you're out" and the toughest punishment laws ever passed by the United States Congress.

We are going out now, the Cabinet, mayors of both parties, citizens of both parties all across this country, to say that this crime bill cannot die. Congress has an obligation to the American people that goes way beyond politics and way beyond party. The American people have said over and over this is their first concern. If we can't meet this concern, there is something