

badly wrong in Washington. And we are going today, starting now, to the National Association of Police Officers conference to carry this battle back. We are going to fight and fight and fight until we win this battle for the American people.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:12 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, prior to his departure for Minneapolis, MN.

Remarks to the National Association of Police Organizations in Minneapolis, Minnesota *August 12, 1994*

Thank you. Thank you very much, Sergeant Ganley, for your introduction and for your life of commitment. I'm glad to be here again with Mayor Sayles Belton and Mayor Coleman in the Twin Cities area. I want to thank Senator Wellstone and Congressman Vento for flying home with me. And I want to thank Congressman Vento along with Tim Penny, David Minge, Martin Sabo, Jim Oberstar, and Jim Ramstad for voting for safer streets and a brighter future last night in the United States House. I want to thank Tom Scotto and my longtime friend Bob Scully and the other members of NAPO, Dennis Flaherty and others, for their support for all the elements of this crime bill. And I'd like to thank especially the two mayors who flew here with me today, one a Republican, one a Democrat, both former prosecutors, people who believe in the promise of our country and our future and understand that unless we do something about crime we're never going to fulfill it. Ed Rendell and Rudolph Giuliani represent what this country ought to be about, people belonging to the political party of their choice but when the time comes putting party aside and putting people first. And I thank them, and I wish we had more like them, in the United States Congress.

Now folks, you all know what happened last night. The House of Representatives tried to take the easy way out, tried to walk away from the crime bill. Because of organized, intense, and highly political pressure, a majority walked away, away from the police patrolling our streets, away from the children and the senior citizens afraid to walk on those streets, away from all the hard-working middle class Americans who were not organized into any group but who have told us over and over again that

crime is their first concern and pleaded with us to do something about it.

The people of Minneapolis know that taking the easy way out is no longer an option. Two years ago next month, Officer Jerry Haaf was shot in the back in a restaurant by gang members. Today his wife, Marilyn, their two children, and their two grandchildren and one son-in-law came to be with me and to meet with me. I'd like to ask them to stand up and be recognized. [*Applause*] Their husband, father, grandfather gave everything he had to the Minneapolis police force for 30 years, and he and his family deserve better than what they got from the House of Representatives last night.

You know, we had a wonderful visit in there. It never occurred to me or to Mayor Giuliani or to Mayor Rendell or to Congressman Vento or Senator Wellstone, who were in there visiting with his family, to ask them whether they were Republicans or Democrats or independents. I don't have a clue. And I don't care. They're entitled to better than they got from the House of Representatives last night.

Every day, the police of this country, including those in this wonderful national organization who are convening here, put on uniforms and badges and walk on streets, into problems, risking their lives to serve people they're sworn to protect. They don't run from their responsibilities. They don't hide behind tricks. And they don't walk away from their folks. If they did, think what would happen to the United States.

That's why the walk-away last night in Congress is so disturbing. The first responsibility of government is law and order. Without that, freedom can never really be fully alive. Without that, people can never really fully pursue the American dream.

The police here know that. That's what their lives are all about. Most ordinary Americans, without regard to their party, know that, deep down in their bones. Last night we had a vote on democracy's most fundamental responsibility, and law and order lost, 210 to 225.

Two hundred and twenty-five Members of the Congress participated in a procedural trick orchestrated by the National Rifle Association and intensely promoted by the Republican congressional leadership, a trick designed with one thing in mind, to put the protection of partisan and special interests over the protection of ordinary Americans and still leave what Mr. Scotto called the Jackie Mason trick: "Well, I would have voted for it if only it had been there for me to vote on."

It's the same old Washington game: Just stick it to ordinary Americans, because special interests can keep you in Congress forever and special interests can beat you because they're organized and they have money and they can confuse God-fearing, hard-working, ordinary Americans.

Well, goodness knows, I've seen a lot of that in my time, as your President and even before. But the time has come for those of you to say that the only way for Congress to make their seats safe is to make the rest of America safer.

When I ran for this office and when I went to Washington, I had dreams that many said were naive. I really dreamed that we could govern in Washington the way most mayors and Governors do, that somehow we would be able to go beyond the labels that colored our view of the past, beyond Republican and Democrat and liberal and conservative and whether you were for punishment or prevention in this case.

Those old left-right deals, they make great headlines, but they often don't do anything to solve people's problems. They're great in 30-second ads, throwing those rhetorical bombs over the wall at your opponent, but they don't keep any kids alive or help any families to get through the day. And we're in a whole new era in which everything in the world is changing, and we cannot afford to be bound by the categories of the past.

The thing I like so much about this crime bill—Mayor Giuliani's right, if he sat down alone and wrote it, it wouldn't be just like it is. If I sat down alone and wrote it, it wouldn't be just like it is. But the thing that's so good about

it is that it rejects all those false choices that the politics of the past always tries to impose on ordinary people in our complicated lives. It says, no more false choices; let's do what common sense dictates. And the reason it does is that this bill was largely the handiwork of people in law enforcement. We never had a bill before that was endorsed by every major law enforcement group in the entire United States. So it puts 100,000 police on the street. It says "three strikes and you're out" is the law of the land and makes available more funds for prisons to house serious offenders. It bans handgun ownership for juveniles and bans assault weapons that gangs and thugs use to outgun the police. But it also protects 650 specifically named hunting and sporting weapons, something the American people too often are not told. It imposes tougher penalties for violent crimes, all right. There is a death penalty for killing an officer of the law in the line of duty. But it also has the prevention funds in there. You heard these people in law enforcement talking about it.

It makes my blood boil when I hear people talking about pork. Because you see, I have seen the eyes of schoolchildren after the D.A.R.E. officer has talked to them. I remember when the D.A.R.E. program came into my child's elementary school and how it affected the way she looked at the whole issue of drugs and her personal responsibility and how it affected all those kids who never had a daddy at home to say, "This is right" or "This is wrong," who didn't have a job in the home to say, "This is the future you can have."

Who are we trying to kid with all of this rhetoric? Talk to people like us, who have been to the funerals of police officers gunned down in the line of duty, and I dare you to find one person who knows anything about this who's not for tougher punishment and more prevention.

Just imagine what would be happening in America today if Congress had yesterday voted to take 100,000 police officers off of the street, to put 19 more kinds of assault weapons on the street, to get rid of prison space for 100,000 criminals. Well, that's what they did: no to 100,000 police, no to the juvenile ownership of handguns ban, no to the assault weapons ban, no to "three strikes and you're out," no to the prisons, no to the prevention.

You know, this is the kind of political mess Congress has been caught in over this crime

bill for 6 years, before I ever showed up, under two previous Presidents, just politics. Everybody talked about crime; nothing ever got done for 6 years. The average violent criminal only stays in prison 4 years. We let a whole generation go by with nothing getting done.

Now, last night, we gave the Congress a chance, a chance to put people ahead of politics, to go with police and punishment and prevention. And until last night, I really thought they would. Until last night, this crime bill was a bipartisan effort to the core.

The first time the bill came up in the House of Representatives, the assault weapons ban wasn't in it, but there was even more prevention money in it, and 65 Republicans voted for the crime bill last April with the prevention money they now attack in the bill.

In May, 38 Republicans voted for the assault weapons ban with the 650 hunting and sporting weapons protected. But when the crime bill came back to the House, it had even more police, more prisons, tougher penalties, and the assault weapons ban they had already adopted.

Then, instead of 65 Republicans or even 38, only 11 brave Republicans, including Jim Ramstad from Minnesota, stood up and did the right thing. The rest, including 19 Republicans who voted for everything in this bill and more than 50 who voted for the prevention programs they now attack, walked away and turned it into a partisan issue.

Yes, they were joined in voting no by some Democrats, a handful of whom were, on grounds of conscience, opposed to the death penalty, most of whom came from places like my home. They come from smalltown, rural America where hunting is important, where the crime rates tend to be lower, where the NRA is very successful at scaring people with misinformation.

But you know something, there were a lot of Democrats who voted against the assault weapons ban who came back and voted for the crime bill last night. There were some Democrats who were deeply opposed to capital punishment, and they still voted for the crime bill

last night because they put the safety of the people of this country first.

We need more Democrats, and we need more Republicans to follow the lead of those 11 brave Republicans and the Democrats who put aside their differences with certain specific provisions to put the American people first. That is what we must have, more people like that, people who believe in you and your future and will not take the easy way out. The walk-away crowd has got to change.

You know that we didn't get you a crime bill yesterday. But we're going to get you a crime bill. We are going to get you a crime bill.

To all the police officers in this country who walk out there for us every day, Washington cannot walk away from you. And all the ordinary Americans who are just out there watching this unfold, hearing all the rhetorical wars back and forth, who know there's no "American association for ordinary citizens" up there walking the halls of Congress, we're not going to walk away from you either.

Yes, it was a defeat yesterday, and I felt terrible about it. But this morning I woke up feeling good because that's a vote I'd much rather be on the losing side of than the winning side. I am glad I will never have to explain to my wife, my daughter, my grandchildren, and the people who sent me to Washington why I did something like what was done to the American people yesterday. Let us turn it around and put the people of this country first.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 1:30 p.m. at the Marriott City Center. In his remarks, he referred to Sgt. Mick Ganley, president, and Dennis Flaherty, executive director, Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association; Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton of Minneapolis, MN; Mayor Norm Coleman of St. Paul, MN; Tom Scotto, president, and Robert T. Scully, executive director, National Association of Police Organizations; Mayor Edward Rendell of Philadelphia; and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani of New York.