

Oct. 17 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1994

We just have to keep working. We have to keep working until it's all done.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:50 a.m., prior to his departure for Albuquerque, NM.

Remarks to the International Association of Chiefs of Police in
Albuquerque, New Mexico
October 17, 1994

Thank you very much. Chief Daughtry, Chief Whetzel, ladies and gentlemen of the IACP, I am honored to be here. I love the jacket, and I love what it stands for. I thank you more than I can say for your help and support in passing the Brady bill and the crime bill.

I'd like to acknowledge in this audience today the presence of some very important people here in the State of New Mexico and throughout our Nation. First of all, behind me, the Governor of the State of New Mexico, Governor Bruce King. Bruce and I are two of the only three people serving in America who were Governors in the seventies, the eighties, and the nineties. I don't know what that means anymore. [Laughter] I can barely remember them.

I'm delighted to be here with the two Senators from the State of New Mexico, Senator Domenici and Senator Bingaman, who are out here. Congressman Steve Schiff, the Congressman from this district, is here. Thank you, sir. My good friend Congressman Bill Richardson, who was very active in passing the crime bill—where's Congressman Richardson? He's here somewhere. Thank you. And of course, the mayor, Mayor Marty Chavez, who is one of my jogging partners, is here.

I want to also say that, you know, I think I have more administration members who have been active in this outfit than previous Presidents. Your ex-president Lee Brown is now our drug czar. Your ex-vice president Tom Constantine is now our DEA Administrator. And I thank you for that. The head of the U.S. Marshals Service, Eduardo Gonzalez, was Tampa Bay chief and once active in this organization. So I feel at home here.

I think our FBI Director is here. I want to tell a story on him. Is Louis Freeh here somewhere? Tomorrow? He's coming tomorrow? It's the first time I've been ahead of him in a long time. [Laughter]

I want to tell you a story about the—since this is an international organization, one of the things that I have really tried to do as President is to build international cooperation in law enforcement. It's important in dealing with drugs. It's important in dealing with terrorism. It's important in dealing with organized crime.

Lee Brown and Tom Constantine, both of them, as you know, have major responsibilities that go beyond our Nation's borders, as you would expect, in dealing with the drug problems. But the FBI Director, Mr. Freeh, also took a very popular trip to Europe and to Russia not very long ago, and slightly after that, when I was following him instead of the other way around, I went to Riga, Latvia, to celebrate the withdrawal of Russian forces from Eastern Europe for the first time since World War II and from the Baltic States. And we had this meeting with the heads of the government of Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia. And so help me, the first thing the President of Latvia said is, "Can we have an FBI office in Riga?" [Laughter]

Now, it's funny, and it's flattering, but it's also serious. Why? Because as these countries convert from totalitarian societies to free societies, as they become much more open, they become much more vulnerable to organized crime because they haven't developed their banking system and their trading rules and their business rules. And that relates to whether they, themselves, then become more vulnerable to drug trafficking and to terrorism and to trafficking in weapons of mass destruction or stolen nuclear materials or any of that sort of thing. So I say to you, I'll make you a prediction: For the next 10 years when you meet, more and more and more, your concentration will have to be on the international aspects of the crime problem which affects what you do on the streets in your cities and towns throughout the United States.

I'd like to talk a little today about the crime bill and what it means against the background of the crime problem in America. And the state of play, as you know, is very troubling, because the good news is that in many of our cities the crime rate is actually going down. The mayor of Odessa, Texas, was in town the other day when we handed out the first wave of grants, police grants, under the new crime bill, only 2 weeks after the bill was signed. And she said they'd had a drop in the crime rate in excess of 15 percent for 3 years running because of community policing, because of what law enforcement officers have done. The mayor of Houston was reelected with 91 percent of the vote after they had over a 20 percent drop in crime in only one year there. This is happening in many cities and towns throughout the country.

On the other hand, we know that a lot of small towns and suburban areas have rising crime because as cities clamp down on crime, a lot of times the criminals just move their base of operation, and they're not as well equipped to deal with it. We also know that even as overall crime rates drop, the rate of random violence among young people, people under the age of 18, is going up dramatically in sickening ways that we have all seen again in recent days.

The point I want to make about all this is that this is a manifestation of trends that have been developing in our country for quite a long while now. We have had really 30 years, a whole generation and more, of these trends that have been developing in a lot of the high-crime areas in America: the breakdown of families and community organizations and neighborhood organizations, the loss of economic opportunity, creating huge social vacuums into which have moved gangs and guns and drugs and crime and violence.

I wanted this crime bill to pass very badly because I believed that the National Government had a responsibility to help you deal with it. But we have to look at what we can do together within the crime bill and then what we have to do beyond the crime bill, because we're going to have to change this country from the grassroots up. We're going to have to change the culture that a lot of these kids live in. And you can do it, I can do it, parents can do it, but we're all going to have to do it. And there is clearly something for everybody to do.

The first job I ever had as an elected official was as attorney general of my State, and I began to work with law enforcement on a regular basis. Then I was Governor for a dozen years, the years when crime was exploding in America. I built prison cells. I devised work programs. I put in education programs and drug education programs and boot camps for first offenders. I enforced the capital punishment laws and tried to find ways to rehabilitate people who were getting out. I went to funerals of police officers who were friends and family members of friends of mine who died in the line of duty.

Dealing with all this has made an indelible impression on me. And when I became President, I guess I had in that sense more personal experience with the human cost and the human side of crime and law enforcement than a lot of people who have had this job. I was determined to bring an end to 6 years of political debate in Washington and to pass the Brady bill, which had been there for 7 years, to pass a crime bill, which had been debated for 6 years, because I knew that we had some things that we had to do. I am doing my best where I live and where I work to get this country together and to move our country forward again.

I think my mission as President is to keep the American dream alive and to help make sure Americans can compete and win as we move into this exciting 21st century by making Government work for ordinary people and by bringing this economy back, by making us more secure and more prosperous in our relations with the rest of the world. After 21 months, I can tell you I think that we've made a good start. America's in better shape than it was 2 years ago. We've got more jobs, low inflation, a much lower deficit. Over 70 percent of the new jobs coming into our economy this year, according to a report just published today, are higher wage jobs. We're moving away from the time when all of our new jobs were low-wage jobs.

We've got a smaller Federal Government, by more than 70,000 already, that's doing more for ordinary citizens. The Congress just passed and I signed a procurement bill which changes the way we spend your money when we buy things, and it'll put an end to the \$500 hammers and the \$50 ashtrays. The Vice President kind of has mixed feelings about that. He'll never get to go on David Letterman again now because

of that, but it was the right thing to do. [*Laughter*]

Russian missiles are no longer pointed at the United States. We've got big increases in trade that are fueling these high-wage jobs. And now America is leading the way to peace and security and democracy, as you've seen in the last few days in the Middle East and Northern Ireland and Eastern Europe and, of course, in Haiti.

But all of us know, I think, that no matter how much economic progress we made, no matter how much progress we make in dealing with trouble spots around the world, there will be a gnawing feeling that all is not right in America until our children feel safe in their schools and on their streets and Americans feel secure in their homes and at their work.

We have to do things that will go beyond talking, that will actually reduce the rates of crime and violence in the United States, that will actually make sure that more of our children do say no to drugs and gangs and guns, and yes to books and to boys and girls clubs and to games. That's what the Brady bill was all about; that's what the crime bill was all about. It was the National Government's contribution to a national effort to really change the way Americans are living, to change the way they feel inside. And it is terribly important.

I was in Detroit the other day doing an editorial board meeting, and the Detroit Free Press had done a program with children in the area and had taken letters from children. And a little girl named Porsha, 9 years old, wrote me a letter and said, "I just want you to make me feel safer. I don't feel safe." Many of you saw the reports that I gave when we were debating the crime bill about that 9-year-old boy in New Orleans who wrote me a letter saying, "Can't you make me feel safe?" And he was killed on the street in a random shooting just a few days after he wrote me. A 10-year-old son of a member of my administration, a young man brought up in a well-to-do home, goes to good schools and lives in a beautiful neighborhood, wrote me a wonderful letter the day after the crime bill passed, a 10-year-old boy saying, "I know you think that I wouldn't be afraid of this, but every time my friends and I go downtown to a movie, I am afraid I will be shot before I get home. And I feel so much better now that this crime bill has passed."

These are the voices of the children of America, across racial and income and regional lines,

telling us that we have to do better. That is what this is about. Well, we are doing better, but there's more to be done.

The Brady bill has made a difference; all of you know it. There are thousands of people who have already been denied weapons who were not entitled to them, who had a criminal background, who would have gotten them if it hadn't been for the Brady bill.

And the crime bill will make a difference. We have evidence of that. Before the crime bill passed last year, I asked Congress to make a downpayment on our commitment to put 100,000 more police officers on the street, and the Congress funded another 2,000 police officers. Last week when we gave out the first police grants under the crime bill, Chief David Massey from Ocean City, Maryland, came with the police officers he'd hired under the first grant. One of them was an ex-linebacker at the University of Maryland, the sort of person that you just see and you want to ask permission. [*Laughter*] This young man was in a community policing program riding a bicycle in Ocean City. And very soon after he went to work, he caught a serial rapist, he did, as a community police officer. Now, all the victims that will never be preyed upon by that rapist will never know what they owe to that one young man who is a community police officer. And now we're going to be able to multiply that by 100,000 in every State in this country.

Something else I think that really needs to be pounded home over and over again is that this crime bill was fashioned largely by law enforcement officers. From the punishment programs to the policing programs to the prevention programs, it was the law enforcement officers who shaped what was in it. You said we ought to have "three strikes and you're out" because there were some violent criminals who kept getting paroled because they were lucky enough not to have severe consequences to the victims of their crime. But what they tried to do was terrible. That's what the purpose of "three strikes and you're out" was.

You said that too many people were getting out too quick because there wasn't enough prison space, so there's provision for 100,000 more prison cells in this bill—never been done before—the Federal Government had never before helped to build prison space for States. You said that we ought to have capital punishment if someone kills a police officer, and it's in the

bill. You said it ought to be against the law for a minor to carry a handgun except when supervised by an adult; it's in the bill. You said we should do more for victims of crime. You said we should make a serious assault on the problems faced by women and children, the problems of domestic violence and neighborhood violence. You said we should do more to make schools safer. You said we should do more to give our kids some prevention programs, some things they could say yes to, places to go, things to do, good things to do, maybe most important, good people to look up to when they can't find that at home.

When the NRA tried to take the assault weapons ban out of the crime bill, you stood firmly in favor of leaving it in, not because you were against the rights of hunters and sportsmen but because you knew that there were 650 weapons in the bill specifically protected from any Government interference. And to those of you who come from smalltown and rural areas, you can go home and tell your sportsmen that we are not going to allow the Federal Government to interfere with the legitimate interests of hunters and sportsmen, but we do not support leaving weapons in the hands of kids that's only purpose is to kill as many people as quickly as they can.

And you said that we ought to have 100,000 more police. Indeed, we probably ought to have more, but that's all we could figure out how to pay for. For the American people now, that's a number that doesn't mean a lot. That's why last week was so important, when we had 400 communities coming up and little towns getting one police officer and bigger places getting 25 or 30, because people began to visualize what that means. There are 550,000 police officers in this country. If you add 100,000 and they all go into beat work, if they actually go into working to prevent crime and to catch criminals, it'll be about a 20 percent increase in the presence of police on the street. It will work. It will work. We've had only a 10 percent increase in police officers in the last 30 years, while we've had a 300 percent increase in violent crime. This was a critical component of the crime bill.

And today I want to announce two important steps to get those officers on the streets as quickly as possible. And you will have the release from the Justice Department here today supporting that.

First of all, we're going to make it possible for cities with at least 50,000 people to begin hiring officers immediately, by setting aside some money even before the grants are awarded so that you can know what you're going to get and you can start hiring and training now. And the grants will be there when you put the people on the payroll full-time.

Secondly, for cities and towns of fewer than 50,000 people who don't have a lot of people in clerical departments to help you deal with the Federal Government, we're going to do for you what we did for small business people applying for SBA loans. We're going to give you a one-page application with about eight questions on it, and you can start filling them out right now, so that nothing will come between America and the new police officers.

I'd like to end today by asking you to reflect on three things. One is a tribute to how the Congress funded this bill. This is a big bill. It was funded not by raising taxes, not by increasing the deficit but by reducing the size of the Federal Government by 270,000 over 6 years and giving all the money back to local communities to fight crime. That's how it was funded. I consider that to be a solemn trust with America that we must not breach. And you will have to work every year for the next 6 years to make sure that we keep that trust.

The second point I want to make is that for most of its life this crime bill enjoyed broad bipartisan support, which dissipated at the end of the debate, as all of you know. It became a political football, first, because there were some who were honestly willing to sacrifice everything in the crime bill to beat the assault weapons ban—to give up the police, to give up the prison cells, to give up the capital punishment provisions, to give up the prevention programs, to give up the violence against women section, to give up the victims against crime section, to give it all up. Second, there were some who just thought it was important to kill the bill for political reasons.

That's all in the past now. It passed. What I want to say to you is, we have got to make this crime bill work, every provision of it work. We have got to demonstrate to our people that the money is being well-spent. And we have to find a way to reach out at the grassroots level across political lines. We have to stop this. We can't tell the American people they've got to change their behavior to change this country

if crime is a partisan political issue. The victims of crime are Republicans, Democrats, and independents. The people who put on uniforms every day are Democrats, Republicans, and independents. This is about America and our future. We must never again permit crime to be divisive in a partisan political way. And you can stop it, and I want you to do it.

And I have to tell you, the only thing that I really worry about now in that regard is that in this election season, there are many who are campaigning on a Contract With America which costs a trillion dollars, to balance the budget, to increase defense, to revitalize Star Wars, to give huge tax cuts. And there is no clear notion of how this is going to be paid for. But the only option to pay for it is the way it was paid for before, higher deficits and cuts in everything else from Medicare to veterans benefits to this crime bill.

So I ask you: Start today. Say, "We've fought too hard for this bill. We won it fair and square. Let's not take it away indirectly by adopting a commitment to a budgetary process that will make it utterly impossible to fund the crime bill." The lives and the future of the American people, and especially our children, are too important. This must not become a political football. The bill is long. The trust is there. We must fund this crime bill. We cannot back away, and you must see that it is done.

The third thing I want to say, and probably way the most important thing, is that we have now done a major thing with this crime bill, and you will do major things with it. But the people of this country have a job to do here, too. We're not here giving things out to the American people. We're here challenging the American people to take their streets and their schools and their neighborhoods and, indeed, their homes back. And if all of us go out here and say the right things and do the right things and we get no help from the rest of America, we'll be back here next year and the year after and the year after that, bemoaning the same problems. And you know that as well as I do.

You now have the tools to deal with this problem. But you've got a whole country out there full of people who have to help. Parents have to recognize that the real war on crime begins at home. If the first responsibility of Government is to provide law and order, the first responsibility of parents is to teach right from wrong. We've got to have more folks turning

off the TV and knowing where their kids are and spending time reading and doing homework and accepting personal responsibility. And we've got to have more folks helping them, like those wonderful police officers in the D.A.R.E. programs all across America. Kids are going to look up to somebody, and it's up to the adults in this country to decide who they're going to look up to.

What do you think about those two kids, 10 and 11 years old, in Chicago that threw that 5-year-old boy out the window? A 5-year-old kid, who knew right from wrong, lost his life at the age of 5 because he wouldn't steal candy, because he knew right from wrong. And his brother, only 3 years older, knew right from wrong and he wouldn't steal candy either, trying desperately to save his little brother's life. Who did the other two kids look up to? Who did they come in contact with who could have taught them right from wrong and didn't? Who did they come in contact with who taught them wrong? What about that little kid that was set on fire, burned over 85 percent of his body, 3 years old, not even big enough to do anything wrong? Who taught those children right from wrong?

You know, we see all these stories of these kids doing these things, and then we see that they apparently feel no remorse. At that age in their development, it is a question of where they got the message. Where did it occur to them to hang somebody out of a window in a highrise? How do they learn to pick up a gun? Where do they know that a fast buck today is better than 10 years or 12 years or 16 years of hard work and school to make something of yourself?

These kids are looking up to somebody. Who are they going to look up to? How are they going to learn this? We can hire 5 million police officers, and if we keep losing the battle for what these kids think is right and wrong, we're going to be in a lot of trouble.

I know we grownups sometimes—we're too negative sometimes; we're too cynical sometimes. A good Catholic friend of mine and I the other day were having a theological discussion, and he said, "You can never get discouraged, Bill, because the only truly unforgivable sin is despair." That's why I preach hope all the time. I am telling you, this country is coming back economically. This country has resources and character and richness and diversity that

will open unparalleled opportunities to us in the 21st century. This is a good country.

When the delegation came back from Haiti yesterday, they said that all the Haitian people had these little signs in Creole, painted, and the most popular one said simply, "Thank you, America." They looked at those young men and women we sent down there in uniform, and just by walking around, these young people, our kids, they make a statement about what's right and what's wrong, what's good and what's bad, what kind of a person it's worth being, just by being there and being who they are. And it is thrilling to other people to see the best of this country.

And we need not be worried about that if we just roll up our sleeves and face our challenges and go on. But what we must be worried about is wave upon wave upon wave of these little children who don't have somebody both good and strong to look up to, who are so vul-

nerable that their hearts can be turned to stone by the time they're 10 or 11 years old. And when there is a good one, a 5-year-old kid in difficult circumstances, blooming like a flower in the desert, knowing that it's wrong to steal candy, he actually has his life at risk.

That's why all of you wanted these prevention programs. But I am telling you, you've got to go home, and you've got to say, "Okay, I'll wear my D.A.R.E. uniform, I'll do my part, but every last citizen in this country has got to do more than look at you and demand that you do something about crime. We have got to teach our children and lift them up."

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:38 a.m. at the Albuquerque Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Sylvester Daughtry and John T. Whetzel, past president and incoming president of the association.

Remarks on the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty in Albuquerque *October 17, 1994*

I am delighted that Israel and Jordan have reached agreement on the text of their peace treaty. Earlier today, I spoke with King Hussein and Prime Minister Rabin. I congratulated them on their historic achievement and on their courage and persistence in getting there. I assured them that the United States will continue to stand with them in the days ahead and to support this peace process as we have all along.

These leaders have decided that from now on they will live in peace as neighbors. They have decided that they want to be friends. And their friendship and their peace is clearly welcomed by the friends of peace throughout the world. At a time when hatred and extremism

and threatening behavior still stalk the Middle East, this is a clear signal that there can be a different future. This agreement reminds us that moderation and reason can and will prevail in the Middle East, that nations can put conflict behind them, that statesmen can lead people to peace.

On behalf of the American people, I want to say a profound word of thanks and congratulations to both King Hussein and Prime Minister Rabin, and especially to the people of Israel and the people of Jordan.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:42 p.m. at the Albuquerque Convention Center.

Interview With Mark Riley and Laura Blackburne of WLIB Radio, New York City *October 18, 1994*

Mr. Riley. Mr. President, good morning.
The President. Good morning. How are you?

Mr. Riley. Fine, thank you.