

be able to keep up with materials terrorists use to build bombs.

The House also voted to let terrorists like Hamas continue to raise money in America by stripping the Justice Department's authority to designate organizations as terrorists and thereby stop them from raising funds in the United States. The House voted against allowing us to deport foreigners who support terrorist activities more quickly, and it voted to cripple our ability to use high-tech surveillance to keep up with stealthy and fast-moving terrorists.

At the same time the bill went easy on terrorists, it got tough on law enforcement officials. The House stripped a provision that would have helped protect police officers from cop-killer bullets. And it ordered a commission to study not the terrorists but the Federal law enforcement officials who put their lives on the line to fight terrorism. Even the Republican chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Henry Hyde,

couldn't believe what his colleagues did, saying the House eviscerated the terrorism bill. I urge the Senate to stand firm and turn this bill back into the strong antiterrorism legislation I want to sign and America needs.

Our Nation has felt the lash of terrorism. We know its terrible costs, and we know that only America can lead the world's fight against it. We can't let the gun lobby turn America into a safehouse for terrorists. Congress should get back on track and send me tough legislation that cracks down on terrorism. It should listen to the cries of the victims and the hopes of our children, not the back-alley whispers of the gun lobby.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:08 p.m. on March 15 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 16.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Product Liability Legislation March 16, 1996

Dear Mr. Leader:

I will veto H.R. 956, the Common Sense Product Liability Legal Reform Act of 1996, if it is presented to me in its current form.

This bill represents an unwarranted intrusion on state authority, in the interest of protecting manufacturers and sellers of defective products. Tort law is traditionally the prerogative of the states, rather than of Congress. In this bill, Congress has intruded on state power—and done so in a way that peculiarly disadvantages consumers. As a rule, this bill displaces state law only when that law is more beneficial to consumers; it allows state law to remain in effect when that law is more favorable to manufacturers and sellers. In the absence of compelling reasons to do so, I cannot accept such a one-way street of federalism, in which Congress defers to state law when doing so helps manufacturers and sellers, but not when doing so aids consumers.

I also have particular objections to certain provisions of the bill, which would encourage wrongful conduct and prevent injured persons from recovering the full measure of their dam-

ages. Specifically, the bill's elimination of joint-and-several liability for noneconomic damages, such as pain and suffering, will mean that victims of terrible harm sometimes will not be fully compensated for it. Where under current law a joint wrongdoer will make the victim whole, under this bill an innocent victim would suffer when one wrongdoer goes bankrupt and cannot pay his portion of the judgment. It is important to note that companies sued for manufacturing and selling defective products stand a much higher than usual chance of going bankrupt; consider, for example, manufacturers of asbestos or breast implants or intra-uterine devices.

In addition, for those irresponsible companies willing to put profits above all else, the bill's capping of punitive damages increases the incentive to engage in the egregious misconduct of knowingly manufacturing and selling defective products. The provision of the bill allowing judges to exceed the cap in certain circumstances does not cure this problem, given Congress's clear intent, expressed in the Statement of Managers, that judges should do so only in the rarest of circumstances.

The attached Statement of Administration Policy more fully explains my position on this issue—an issue of great importance to American consumers, and to evenly applied principles of federalism.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Bob Dole, Senate majority leader, Thomas Daschle, Senate minority leader, Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard Gephardt, House minority leader. A statement of administration policy on H.R. 956 was attached to the letter. The letter was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary but was not issued as a White House press release.

Remarks to the United Jewish Appeal Young Leadership Conference March 17, 1996

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. You know, I've been trying to convince everyone else in Washington to delay the onset of this year's campaign, and you aren't helping very much. [Laughter] But you have my permission to vary from the official line. [Laughter]

I thank you so much. I want to thank my friend David Hermelin for his wonderful remarks and his remarkable service. I don't know that I've ever known anybody that had such a remarkable combination of energy and commitment to the common good. He is indefatigable, and all of his energies seem to me to be directed toward good causes, including my own. [Laughter] And I thank him for that.

To Ambassador Yaacobi, Mrs. Rabinovich—Efrat—members of the Young Leadership cabinet, and all of you, thank you for giving me the opportunity to come by tonight. And let me begin by saying that a lot of people speak about trying to advance the cause of humanity, but you actually do something about it. So I want to begin simply by thanking you for everything you do, from the hot meals for the homebound to wheelchairs for the disabled to shelter for refugees to comfort for victims of Alzheimer's and AIDS. And thank you, of course, for your many services to the cause of Israel.

You know, I was trying to think of something I could say tonight, just one line that would capture our country's rich diversity and the common commitment we should all feel to the cause of peace and standing up against terrorism ev-

erywhere in the world. And it seems to me the best line I could give all of you at this great Jewish event tonight is "Happy Saint Patrick's Day." [Laughter]

Let me say that the 2 days and 9 hours I spent going from here to Sharm al-Sheikh to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and back to Tel Aviv again and then home were a remarkable experience for me. I am grateful that the United States is a friend of Israel and a friend of the cause of peace. I am grateful that the United States is an implacable opponent of terrorism. And I am grateful that at this moment I was able to go on behalf of all the American people to stand with the people of Israel in their time of pain and sorrow and challenge to express the outrage of our people at the latest campaign of terror and to show our solidarity.

All of you know this, but it bears repeating that the terrorist attacks claimed not only Israeli lives but also those of Palestinians—and some of the most gripping tales I heard when I was there came from their family members, who also long for peace—and two young Americans, Sarah Duker and Matthew Eisenfeld.

Now, it is important, quite apart from the peace process, that we once again say to the world, we know no country is safe from terror. We have seen it in the World Trade Center and in Oklahoma City in the United States. We know our friends in Japan have suffered it in the terrible attack of sarin gas in the Tokyo subway. But we know that in the Middle East it has too often been employed as an instrument of politics. And it is wrong. We stand against it now. We redouble our efforts against it, and we will be against it forever.