

budget that will lower interest rates, balance the budget, grow the economy, and give your kids a future. That's what I did. And that's the way I feel about welfare reform and health care reform and all these other things.

I want to work with the Congress. But the main thing I want is to give you the kind of future you need and deserve. So if you are willing to stand up and fight one more time, we can have an American dream for all Americans

in the 21st century. That's what we can have. We can have family values. We can have a free and safe America. We can have a better future.

Thank you, and God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:23 p.m. in the Lausche Building at the Ohio State Fairgrounds. In his remarks, he referred to former Representative Ted Strickland.

## Remarks to the National Association of Attorneys General and an Exchange With Reporters

*March 25, 1996*

*The President.* Please sit down, everybody. The Attorney General and I are delighted to be here. I understand that the Vice President has already been in this morning. Mr. Udall and Mr. Harshbarger and to all the attorneys general here, you're very welcome in the White House, and I'm very glad to see you.

I want to, if I might—I know we're going to have some time later for questions—but I wanted to just speak about two things this morning, especially while our friends in the media are here, that directly affect the work that you do. First of all, I want to applaud those of you who have been in the forefront of dealing with the consequences of tobacco to young people in your States.

As you know, this administration has worked on that very hard. We promulgated the Synar regulation to try to help you do what you are trying to do in your States. And we will do everything we can to help you implement those Synar rules as easily and effectively as possible.

No matter how hard we work on that, I'm convinced that it won't be enough. Young people are barraged constantly by messages that glamour and grit can be found in a package of cigarettes. And we believe that we must act much more strongly to make cigarettes less accessible and to make children less subject to the lures of the advertising. And in that connection, I know that 27 of you wrote to the FDA in support of those objectives. I want to thank you for that. It seems to me that all the evidence clearly indicates that we have to continue to move on this front. It is the most serious

public health problem that our young people face; 3,000 of them a day begin to smoke illegally, and 1,000 will have their lives shortened as a result.

The second thing I want to mention is to thank you for the partnership we've enjoyed in the fight to reduce crime and violence. The police program is continuing apace. We're actually slightly ahead of schedule in the goal of putting 100,000 more police officers on the street. There is now broad recognition in the country that the community policing strategy is central to the successful efforts that many, many communities have enjoyed in bringing down the crime rate. It's one of the good news stories of the United States in the last few years. And we will continue to do that.

We also have worked hard with you on a number of other areas in the crime bill. I want to mention, if I might, one other thing that's especially important, and that is the issue of gun violence. The Brady bill, which became the Brady law, has now directly resulted in over 60,000 people with criminal records being denied access to guns. And it is working well, and I think it has proved, beyond even some of us who supported it—even beyond our expectations, that it can make a difference.

As you know, we've had a recent controversy here in Washington with the attempt in the House of Representatives, which was successful in the House, to repeal the assault weapons ban. It is not presently scheduled for a vote in the Senate yet, but the people who got it voted on in the House certainly haven't given

up, and there are a lot of people on record in support of repealing it in the Senate. So I ask you for your support on that. It would be a mistake. This country needs a lot of things, but it does not need more assault weapons. And we now have been through one good set of hunting seasons in every State in America, and so every hunter who was told that that assault weapon ban represented some threat to his or her ability to go out and hunt deer in the deer seasons, or ducks in my home State, now knows that was not true.

And if it does get to my desk, of course I will veto it, and I'm confident the veto will be sustained. But this should not be brought back up. This should not even be a subject of debate in the United States. But it is still very much alive and well, and so I ask you for your help and your support in that regard.

We have got to continue to work on this crime problem until—everybody knows we will never totally eliminate crime in America; we can't transform human nature. But I do believe if we work at it we can get back to the time when people turn on the evening news and they see a horrible crime story, they're surprised instead of numb to it. And that is, I think, the goal we ought to set for ourselves, that it should become the exception rather than the rule.

And again—I know that I speak for the Attorney General—we have enjoyed working with all of you, and we're glad to be here, and we want to answer some of your questions. I think we'll have a chance to visit after we conclude the public portion of this meeting, but I thank you very much.

I asked the Attorney General if she wanted to give a speech. She said, no, you're coming to see her this afternoon. [*Laughter*]

Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

#### *China and Taiwan*

*Q.* Mr. President, do you think that China and Taiwan are at a turning point now?

*The President.* Do you mean, do I think the tensions are going down?

*Q.* Right, where do you think this is going?

*The President.* Well, I hope they are. I was encouraged by some statements that came out of both sides in the aftermath of the election. And so I hope that is what is going on.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:36 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Tom Udall, New Mexico attorney general, and Scott Harshbarger, Massachusetts attorney general, association president and president-elect, respectively.

## Statement on the Death of Edmund Muskie

*March 26, 1996*

Hillary and I were deeply saddened to learn of the death of former Senator Edmund Muskie. A dedicated legislator and caring public servant, Senator Muskie was a leader in the best sense. He spoke from his heart and acted with conviction. Generations to come will benefit from his steadfast commitment to protecting the land.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family, his friends, and the people of Maine at this difficult time.

NOTE: The related proclamation of March 27 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.