

Pennsylvania Avenue

Q. Mr. President, Pennsylvania Avenue has been closed for a year now, and it hasn't exactly become the urban parklike setting that was planned when it was closed. And it is frequently, in fact, cut off from tourist and pedestrian use. What would you like to see?

The President. Well, I would like—if it is the judgment of the Secret Service and the other security people that we should keep it closed, I would like to see it fixed as it was intended in that plan that was developed about 30 years or so ago and turned into a genuine park so it can be made available to all the many people

who live in and around Washington and all those who come here to visit. It's quite a nice space, and with a little investment, it could be made, I think, quite attractive. Right now the skateboarders and the rollerbladers seem to like it, but I'd like to see it made more helpful to more people.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Polly Klaas, Jacob Wetterling, Adam Walsh, and Megan Kanka, child crime victims; and Bettie Boorda, widow of Adm. Jeremy M. Boorda. H.R. 2137, approved May 17, was assigned Public Law No. 104-145.

Remarks at Webster Groves High School in Webster Groves, Missouri
May 17, 1996

Thank you very much. Let me say, first, thank you for this very warm welcome. Congressman Gephardt and Mrs. Gephardt and I were talking on the way in—it may be too hot for you, but we have just been through the bitterest winter we can remember in Washington, DC, and it's very comfortable for me. I'll never complain about the heat again. We're delighted to be here.

Mayor Williams; Superintendent Gussner; your principal, Patricia Voss; the police chief, Gene Young; let me thank all of you. Let me thank Mr. Johnson and the Jazz Ensemble One for playing here. I used to play in a group like that, and I liked every day of it. I want to thank Mrs. Genovese and the students who did all the banners and the signs. They're just terrific. Thank you.

I came down here with a lot of people today, but one of the staff members that I brought, someone who works for our Secretary of Labor, Bob Reich, is an alumni of Webster Groves, Catherine Jayne. She came down here with me, and I wanted to mention that, just so you'll know your influence is being felt in Washington.

And I want to say a special word of thanks to the young lady who introduced me, Jocelyn Grant. She did a good job, didn't she? Give her another hand. *[Applause]* I know something of her activities, and I want to thank her not only for the introduction, but for being a very

good model of what good citizenship and personal responsibility can mean in a school and a community.

I came here with Congressman Gephardt today to Webster Groves to talk to you about one of the greatest challenges we face as a Nation, the rising tide of violence among our young people. I'm here because this community has worked together to reduce that tide of violence and because we have to work together as a country if we expect your future to be what it ought to be.

You will live most of your lives in the 21st century. It will be an age of unparalleled possibility, the possibility to do things for a living that are more various and more exciting than any generation of Americans has ever known, the possibility to bring this country together across the lines of race and income that divide us, the possibility to live in a world that is more peaceful and free and prosperous and secure than any the world has ever known.

But all those are just possibilities, not guarantees. If you want that kind of country for your future, you'll have to work for it. We'll have to work to make sure that every American, without regard to their station in life, has a chance to live out their dreams. We'll have to work to bridge the differences that still divide too many of our people and make sure that we treat our diversity as a precious asset and that

we come together across racial and regional and gender and income lines. And we'll have to work for a world that is more peaceful.

To achieve that, we'll have to meet a lot of challenges. The Congressman talked about one of them. We have to build stronger families. We have to build a world-class education for all of our people, which is why we've worked so hard for more affordable college loans and more scholarships and more work-study, so that every one of you gets out of here who wants to do it will have a chance to go to college and will never be deterred by the cost of a college education. We want that.

We'll have to work to build a new form of family economic security in this dynamic economy. We'll have to give people now the opportunity for an entire lifetime to get more education, to have access to affordable health care, to have a pension that they'll need for old age that they can carry around with them even if they have to change jobs. We'll have to work to achieve that.

We'll have to work to continue to grow our economy and preserve the environment. But if we don't preserve our natural environment, our clean air, our clean water, our resources, our wildlife, we'll never have the kind of future that America deserves. And I know young people of America are as committed to that as any group of our fellow citizens. We'll have to work to make the world a more peaceful place, more free of terrorism and international crime and drug running and weapons running. And we'll have to work to make sure that you have a Government that does its part. But none of this will matter if we can't fulfill our first responsibility as a society, and that is to preserve lawfulness and to minimize violence in our own homes and streets and neighborhoods and communities.

You know, a lot of Americans are so numb to turning on the television news at night and seeing another report of another violent crime that they just take it for granted; they almost yawn. They say, "Well, I can miss the first 5 minutes of the news, that will be the crime part."

Now, I know that we can never fully eliminate crime from our country because we can't totally transform human nature. But I'll tell you what we can do. We can go back to the time when people go home at night and they turn on the television news and they see a serious crime, when they're appalled, surprised, disgusted, and

shocked, when it is the exception and not the rule. That's the kind of America I want again.

We have worked very, very hard to give American communities the tools they need to bring down the crime rate. With the strong leadership of Dick Gephardt in 1994 we passed a sweeping crime bill that, among other things, will put another 100,000 police officers on the streets of America over a 5-year period. We're already at 43,000 and climbing.

And these police officers are different. They're going back to community police work, not sitting behind a desk but walking a beat, working with the communities, reaching out to children, not only catching criminals but learning the neighborhood, so that they can stop crime from happening and give young people something to say yes to in their future. That is the kind of community police work we need in every community, in every neighborhood, on every street in the United States. And we are determined to achieve that.

We have worked hard to deal with the problem of guns and violence. We passed the Brady bill after years of debate. We passed legislation banning 19 kinds of assault weapons. We passed legislation calling for zero tolerance for guns in the schools of this country.

And you know, there was a lot of controversy about that legislation. I heard the awfulest din about it in 1994 you ever saw. But it's 1996 now, and in Missouri and my native State of Arkansas, we have had every kind of hunting season you can possibly have and not a single hunter has lost his or her rifle. But I'll tell you what has happened: 60,000 people with criminal histories, with mental health problems, and with other things that make them unfit to have handguns have been denied the right to get handguns because of the Brady bill. We did the right thing. We did the right thing.

This is working. All across America the crime rate is dropping. We're in the 4th year in a row of a big drop in crime. In Webster Groves you're on your way to making this the lowest overall crime year in almost 20 years. Congratulations to you.

But I have to tell you something, and that's the reason I'm here and we're in this hot gym on this warm day. [Laughter] If anybody had told me this 4 years ago, I would not have believed it. If anybody had told me the following fact when I was sworn in as President, that you will have 4 years of declining crime rates

in America, the murder rate will drop, the robbery rate will drop, the rate of rape and arson will drop all across America, but unbelievably, the rate of random violence by children under 18 will go up—if someone had told me that 3 years ago, I would not have believed it. But that is exactly what has happened.

And so I'm telling you what we have to do is to solve that. We can't for long go on being a country where the crime rate keeps going up among young people under 18. We now have the largest group of children starting grade school that we have had since the baby boom generation. Within just a few years we'll have the largest number of young people in schools in America in the entire history of the country.

We cannot stand to have higher juvenile crime rates and violence rates when that huge number of young people come here. We have got about 5 years to do something about this problem, and we cannot do it unless the young people of America lead the way. It is your future, and you have to lead the way.

We have done what we could. We passed a bill called the safe and drug-free schools act. It gives money to schools all across the country to do what they think they need to do. Here our program has helped station a plainclothed police officer at the school. Earlier this week, I saw that your State was moving to help when Missouri lawmakers agreed to a final version of a new school safety law. And I applaud the Governor and the legislature for doing that. People should be safe in school. If there's any place on Earth young people should be safe all day, every day, it is when they are in school. Every young person should be safe.

All over America schools are asking for permission to try different things. I was in Long Beach, California, a couple of weeks ago—that's the third biggest school district in our biggest State—and they voluntarily decided to put in school uniforms in their elementary and junior high school. They let the students pick the uniforms and design them. They had a gang problem, and all of a sudden they realized that when their kids were in their own uniforms, nobody mistook them for gang members anymore. People stopped following them home from school. People stopped attacking them on the play yard. They were able to restore discipline, reduce crime, and increase learning.

There are all kinds of things that are happening all across America. But without excep-

tion, we find that they are led by people in the community and especially by active, aggressive young people who say, "I do not want my classmates to live a life of danger; I want us to be safe and secure." That's what we need for you to do today.

Because dangerous gangs are spreading across America, we are working with Federal prosecutors everywhere to try to go after gangs that are seriously violent in the same way our country went after the mob decades ago. We cannot permit the spread of gangs to spread guns, to spread drugs, to spread violence all across the country to communities that don't have to face that today. We are working at that.

We are working to help parents protect their children. Earlier today, before I came here, I signed a bill you may have heard something about; it's called Megan's Law. From now on, every State in the country will be required by law to tell a community when a dangerous sexual predator is in the community.

So we are working on all this. But let me say one more time, the places where crime is down are the places where people are working with the police, the places where young people are taking the lead. I spoke at the graduation at Pennsylvania State University a few days ago, and I asked for a million more volunteers all across America—50 in the 20,000 neighborhoods that have community police watches now—to help bring down the crime rate. So I ask you to do that.

I want your future to be the brightest, best future any generation of Americans has ever known. I believe it can be. I know what the economy will present to those of you who have a good education and who are willing to work. I know what the incredible diversity of America means in a global society where any country would give anything to have the diverse resources of our various racial and ethnic groups, of people educated, committed to freedom, and committed to hard work and free enterprise. But I know, too, that unless we can purge ourselves of crime and violence and drugs and gangs, your future will never be what it ought to be.

So I ask you to stand up, as you have here, for the concept of zero tolerance in school; stand up for the concept that gangs and drugs are wrong; stand up for the idea that you have to participate in a partnership with the police

if you want a safe neighborhood, a safe street, and a safe school.

You have shown what you can do here, but you mark my words, you will have the best future any generation of Americans has ever known if you'll work for it, but only if we can make America a safe place again.

So every one of you—we need your personal commitment: No to crime. No to guns. No to gangs. No to drugs. Yes to your own future. If you do that, your future will be the brightest of any generation in American history.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Representative Richard A. Gephardt's wife, Jane; Mayor Terry Williams of Webster Groves, MO; William Gussner, superintendent of schools; John Johnson, band director; Debbie Genovese, art teacher; and Webster Groves High School student Jocelyn Grant.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Austria-United States Social Security Agreement *May 17, 1996*

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to section 233(e)(1) of the Social Security Act, as amended by the Social Security Amendments of 1977 (Public Law 95-216, 42 U.S.C. 433(e)(1)), I transmit herewith the Supplementary Agreement Amending the Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Austria on Social Security (the "Supplementary Agreement"). The Supplementary Agreement, signed at Vienna on October 5, 1995, is intended to modify certain provisions of the original United States-Austria Social Security Agreement, signed July 13, 1990.

The United States-Austria Social Security Agreement is similar in objective to the social security agreements with Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Such bilateral agreements provide for limited coordination between the United States and foreign social security systems to eliminate dual social security coverage and taxation, and to help prevent the loss of benefit protection that can occur when workers divide their careers between two countries.

The Supplementary Agreement, which would amend the 1990 Agreement to update and clarify several of its provisions, is necessitated by changes that have occurred in U.S. and Austrian law in recent years. Among other things, it would introduce a new method of computing Austrian benefits under the Agreement that will

result in higher Austrian benefits for certain people who have divided their careers between the United States and Austria. Another provision in the Supplementary Agreement will allow U.S. citizens hired in Austria by U.S. Foreign Service Posts to be covered by the Austrian Social Security System rather than the U.S. system. The Supplementary Agreement will also make a number of minor revisions in the Agreement to take account of other changes in U.S. and Austrian law that have occurred in recent years.

The United States-Austria Social Security Agreement, as amended, would continue to contain all provisions mandated by section 233 and other provisions that I deem appropriate to carry out the provisions of section 233(c)(4).

I also transmit for the information of the Congress a report prepared by the Social Security Administration explaining the key points of the Supplementary Agreement, along with a paragraph-by-paragraph explanation of the effect of the amendments of the Agreement. Annexed to this report is the report required by section 233(e)(1) of the Social Security Act on the effect of the Agreement on income and expenditures of the U.S. Social Security program and the number of individuals affected by the Agreement. The Department of State and the Social Security Administration have recommended the Supplementary Agreement and related documents to me.