

other sporting events. Finally, the FDA will soon take steps to require the tobacco industry to educate our children about the real dangers of smoking. There is abundant evidence of both these troubling trends that a lot of young people simply don't believe there is any risk to their health. With this historic action we are taking today, Joe Camel and the Marlboro Man will be out of our children's reach forever.

I want to be clear—we've said it before, let's say it again—cigarettes are a legal product for adults. They have a perfect right to decide whether to smoke. There are many, many good people who have been farming, growing tobacco for generations in their families. They have a right to make a living for themselves and their families, and they will continue to do so. But let's be honest: We hope that over the long run, if we can dramatically reduce rates of smoking among children, the overall consumption of cigarettes will decline. If that happens, these good people who farm the land and work hard should not be left behind. And all of us who have sought this course have a responsibility to help them if they face difficulties.

The cigarette companies still have a right to market their products to adults. But today we are drawing the line on children, fulfilling our obligation as adults to protect them from influences that too often are stronger than they are.

As I said before, I want to say again, this action is a tribute to so many of you who are here today, to the parents, the teachers, the doctors, the public officials. Dr. Bristow, I particularly want to commend the AMA for its writings in its journal, its relentless efforts to educate the American people through the physicians of this country. But I'd like to pay special tribute to the children of America who have joined this crusade, who have organized and led a massive grassroots movement throughout

America to educate and inform people about the dangers of tobacco smoking for children. They've staged teach-ins and "Kick Butts" days all across the country. They have used positive peer pressure on people who could care less what a lot of us old fogies think to teach their fellow students that smoking is not cool. So I want to thank these children for the work they have done to save their generation.

A lot of the work we do around here we know will only be fully manifest in people's lives in the future. We know we can't guarantee the success of any individual or family, but we have to guarantee them the tools and the conditions that will enable them to make the most of their own lives. Today we take a real step to make sure that they have those lives in full measure. We have today met our responsibility to help our country protect its values, protect its children, and ensure its future.

Thank you all for what you've done.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:52 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Linda Crawford, widow of Victor Crawford, a former tobacco lobbyist turned antismoking advocate; Representatives Richard J. Durbin and Martin T. Meehan; Frank J. Kelley, Michigan attorney general; Mark Green, New York City public advocate; Anna Santiago, recipient of the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids Advocate of Year Award; Neal Stewart McSpadden, antismoking advocate; Joseph A. Califano, Jr., president, National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University; C. Everett Koop, former Surgeon General; and Lonnie R. Bristow, former president, American Medical Association. The Food and Drug Administration final rule on children and tobacco was published in the *Federal Register* on August 28.

## The President's Radio Address

*August 24, 1996*

Good morning. As I speak to you today, America can look back on a week of remarkable achievement.

Together we enacted a law to ensure you can take your health insurance from job to job

and never be denied insurance just because you or someone in your family has been sick. Together we made pensions more secure and raised the minimum wage to make it easier for working parents to raise their children. Together

we tore down a failed welfare system to move millions of people from welfare to work while protecting their children. And together we enacted the toughest ever measures to cut off children's access to tobacco products.

America is on the right track, offering more opportunity, demanding more responsibility, building a stronger community, a sense of shared values, and stronger families.

Today I want to talk about something else we have to do to really strengthen America's families, making sure that children can walk home from school or play in their backyards without the plague of violence. We've certainly come a long way, with sweeping anti-crime measures that have helped to reduce our crime rate for 4 years in a row now. We passed the Brady bill, which already has stopped 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers from buying handguns. We're putting 100,000 new police officers on the beat and banning assault weapons. And we're giving our children something to say yes to, some positive activities and strong role models to build better futures.

But nothing is more threatening to our families and communities and more destructive of our basic values than sex offenders who victimize children and families. Study after study tell us that they often repeat the same crimes. That's why we have to stop sex offenders before they commit their next crime, to make our children safe and give their parents peace of mind.

Since taking office, I have undertaken an aggressive three-part plan to stop sexual predators. First, our crime bill required every State in the Nation to keep track of sex offenders. That law is working. Just this week, a previously convicted sex offender who had moved to a new neighborhood in Illinois was arrested for molesting a 9-year-old boy. The police caught him only because they had come to his home to register him under our new law.

Second, I signed Megan's Law, which required States to notify communities when sex offenders move into the neighborhood. Now we're taking the third and most important step. Sixty days ago I directed the Attorney General to draw up a plan for a national registry of

sex offenders. That plan has now reached my desk. Today I am pleased to announce that we are following through on our commitment to keep track of these criminals, not just in a single State but wherever they go, wherever they move, so that parents and police have the warning they need to protect our children. Our reasoning is simple. Deadly criminals don't stay within State lines, so neither should law enforcement's tools to stop them.

Here's how it will work. Every time a sex offender is released, their State will force them to register. Then the FBI will compile these State lists into a national data base. Within 6 months, a new computer network will give States information from every other State for the very first time. A police officer in Cleveland could get information about any known sex offenders in Cleveland, even if the crimes were committed in New York or Los Angeles. Then they will share that information with the families and communities that have a right to know. This national registry sends a simple message to those who would prey on our children: The law will follow you wherever you go.

To meet the parents who have had their children stolen from them, to see how these hateful acts destroy whole families and communities is to know that we need more than local solutions to stop these criminals. We need the resources and resolve of our whole national law enforcement team working together.

Above all, we must move forward to the day when we are no longer numb to acts of violence against children, when their appearance on the evening news is both shocking and very rare. Our approach is working. We're putting cops on the beat, taking guns, drugs, and criminals off the streets. More and more, our children can learn and play and dream without risk of harm. That is an America that is moving in the right direction.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:55 p.m. on August 23 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 24.