

I did it because we believed together that the only way we would ever get the crime rate going back down and start saving children's lives and giving people the confidence they need to deal with all the other challenges—the economic, the educational, the other challenges we face—is if the lessons that were being manifested at the community level in America could somehow sweep the country and be reflected in national policy.

When I became President and I discovered that Senator Biden, then the Chairman of the Senate committee that had control of this legislation, believed the same thing, we fated a lot of heat and became vulnerable to a lot of very—what was in the short run quite effective political rhetoric, you know, we were trying to take everybody's guns away and throwing money at these problems and all that. But you see, now, 4 years later, we know the truth, that what we have tried to do is simply give more people like Mayor Menino and Probation Officer Brooks and Commissioner Evans and Captain Dunford and all the others a chance to succeed all over America. That's what we've tried to do.

It is a very simple strategy, but it will work. It will work. And today the juvenile program I'm going to announce is basically an attempt to take what you have proved works here and give those tools to every community in the Nation to follow. Let me just say, no disrespect to anybody else, but you know the people I listened most closely to today were Terry and Lanita because they're going to be around here long after I'm gone.

And what we have to do, the rest of us, is to construct a system that works for them and that works for parents like the Cherys, who lost a child because of the failures of America and who have spent their lives now trying to make sure it doesn't happen to anybody else. So this is a huge deal.

There was a report—I will just close with this—there was a report that was issued a few

weeks ago by the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, saying that 75 percent of all the teenagers who lose their lives, who are murdered, in the entire industrial world are murdered in America—75 percent. Now, that hasn't happened in Boston in over a year and a half. If it doesn't happen in Boston, it doesn't have to happen anyplace else. We can turn this around.

America now knows we can bring the crime rate down. Now America has to learn that we can save our children and that we do not have to put up with this and that the only way to solve it is the way you have solved it, but that we have a job in Washington to create the conditions and give you the tools which will make it possible for you to solve it. That's what we're trying to do. But let's not forget what the stakes are.

You know, I've spent a lot of time—we had a big telecommunications trade agreement that we finished last weekend which will create a million new jobs in America over the next 12 years. I want every child in Boston to be alive to have a chance to get one of those jobs.

Let's do first things first. Let's get this done, and let's remember that what we're really trying to do is make what you've done here possible for children in communities all across America.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:19 a.m. in the McCormack Building. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Thomas Menino of Boston; Sister Jean Gribaudo, the mayor's youth adviser; Gov. William Weld of Massachusetts; Tanya Brooks, Suffolk County Superior Court probation officer; Paul Evans, Boston police commissioner; Robert P. Dunford, Boston area C-11 police district captain; Terry Thompson and Lanita Tolentino, members of the Mayor's Youth Council; and Joseph and Tina Chery, whose son was a victim of gang crossfire in 1993. The release also included remarks by Attorney General Janet Reno.

Remarks at the University of Massachusetts in Boston February 19, 1997

Thank you. Mr. Mayor; Commissioner Evans; Bulger; Chancellor Sherry Penney; Governor Probation Officer Tanya Brooks; President Weld; Senator Kerry; Congressman Moakley;

Congressman Kennedy—I understand you're also an alumni of this university; Attorney General Harshbarger, the president of the National Association of Attorneys General; thank you all for welcoming me here.

And I'm delighted to be here with two of my great partners in this endeavor, our wonderful Attorney General, Janet Reno, and the Under Secretary of the Treasury for Enforcement, Ray Kelly. Thank you for being here. We're all glad to be here.

I want to thank all the police officers for being here, especially the Voices in Blue for singing the national anthem. They were great. Great job, gentlemen. And I'd like to thank the students at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. I know that 80 percent of the students—I've been told at least that 80 percent of the students here are working virtually full-time while pursuing their degrees. That's a great tribute to you. And if our budget passes, we'll have the direct loan program, the AmeriCorps program, tax cuts for tuition, and a huge increase in Pell grants and work-study. I hope it will help you all.

Oh, there's one more thing before I begin my prepared remarks. This is my first trip to Boston and to Massachusetts in 1997, and if you will forgive me a purely personal remark, I want to thank the people of Massachusetts for giving me the biggest margin of victory of any State in the country. Thank you very much. [Applause] Thank you.

Let me begin, if I might, by trying to put today's event into some context. You heard the mayor talking about declining crime generally in Boston. Let me just ask you to go back to 4 or 5 years ago. When I assumed this office, I wanted to do basically two big things. One is, I wanted to kind of get America fixed up; I wanted things to work again. And then I wanted to get all of us together to focus on what we need to do to prepare our people for a new century; to preserve the American dream for everyone who is willing to work for it without regard to their background or where they start out in life; to preserve a sense of community that embraces every American who is willing to be a responsible citizen; and to create a sense that our families, our neighborhoods, our workplaces, our schools, all of our organizations were working again; and to maintain our leadership in a rapidly changing world. But first we had to make sure things would work.

And the first thing we worked through in Washington was an economic program that was designed to change the whole economic direction of the last several years, to get away from spending ourselves into immediate prosperity through constant deficits to a longer-term strategy to bring the deficit down, get interest rates down, invest in our people, and prove we could trade and compete with the rest of the world.

Now, I just got a report this morning on the last inflationary numbers of that 4-year period, which says that the core rate of inflation—that is the basic things people buy—the inflation rate dropped from 3½ percent to 2½ percent in the previous 4 years; and that the combined rates of unemployment and inflation on average through 4 years, together were 8.7 percent. That's the lowest since Lyndon Johnson was the President of the United States, and that's a good sign. That's a good sign.

But what I want to ask you to focus on today is that in some ways the whole question of having safe streets, safe neighborhoods, safe schools, and safe children has to be prior to economic opportunity, because if people are living in constant fear, if their lives are always disoriented, if they are completely unpredictable, then it is very hard to say to them, "You should stay in school. You should learn all you can. You should look forward to a better future. The 21st century will give you more chances to live out your dreams than ever before." And if the answer you get back is, "What do you mean, man, I'm trying to stay alive until lunch time," then it is very difficult to make this country work.

So we have spent a lot of time, as you heard the previous speakers discuss, working on this. I asked the Attorney General to assume her office because she was a prosecutor in a big urban county in America with a world of problems and because she had learned that only by empowering the people who lived there that she worked with could she not only catch criminals but, more importantly, prevent crime and save children for a better future. And we have been working with the attorney generals, with the prosecutors, with community leaders, with others all across the country for 4 years to try to create the conditions that would make it possible for normal life to prevail in our cities and in other places which had been victimized by crime.

When we passed the crime bill in 1994 with the help of all the Members of Congress here on this platform—and I thank them for it—we made a commitment to put 100,000 new police on our streets so we could go back to community policing. Why? Because violent crime had tripled in 30 years, and the police forces had increased by 10 percent—300 percent against 10 percent. What happened? As a result, people felt overwhelmed and more and more police officers had to ride together in cars instead of walking on streets in neighborhoods and working with their neighbors, so that in a bizarre way, we actually reduced the coverage of the police just so they could be safe.

And now this whole concept of neighborhood or community policing, which Boston has done so brilliantly, is sweeping the country. That, plus the Brady bill, plus the ban on the assault weapons, plus the new efforts to steer young people away from crime, plus tougher penalties for serious offenders, all those things now taking hold all across America have given us 5 years of declining crime for the first time in decades. And that is very, very good news.

But we have to now look at step two because until last year's statistics, we had this heartbreaking, heartbreaking evidence that the crime rate in America was going down, but the crime rate among juveniles under 18 was going up. Violence among adults was going down, even young adults; violence among juveniles going up. Drug use among adults, people over 18, going down dramatically; drug use among people under 18 going up.

Last year, we began to see some hope that it might be dropping off, but we haven't even had 2 years in a row. But we know that in Boston there have been big changes. And we know that we just started the largest class of children in our schools in history. There are now about 52 million young Americans in our schools, the largest school-age population ever, even bigger than the biggest baby boom year, now in our schools.

And so we know we've got about 6 years to turn this juvenile crime thing around, or our country is going to be living with chaos. And my successors will not be giving speeches about the wonderful opportunities of the global economy, they'll be trying to keep body and soul together for people on the streets of these cities if we don't do everywhere in America what you

have begun to do in Boston and save our children.

So the crime bill in '94, the 100,000 police, the neighborhood policing, the Brady bill, the assault weapons ban, all those things were step one. Step two has got to be a very sharp and disciplined focus on the problems of juvenile violence, juvenile crime, juvenile gangs. Ninety-five percent of our largest cities and 88 percent of our smaller cities report that they are plagued by gang crime. Experts predict the number of people arrested for violent crimes will double by the year 2010 unless we do something about it. Fighting, therefore, juvenile crime has got to become our top law enforcement priority.

When Boston launched Operation Night Light, when police and probation officers together can make nightly visits to the homes of young people on probation to make sure they're not in violation; when you had your Operation Cease-Fire vigorously enforcing graffiti, truancy, noise statutes to reclaim neighborhoods and the conditions of ordinary life; when you launched the Boston gun project to shut down illegal gun dealers who sell to young people, by tracing serial numbers and severely punishing those who break the law—these things will work.

Seventy percent of your young people on probation are now sticking to it. That's a huge percentage if you compare it to other places around the country. Youth murders have dropped 80 percent in 5 years, and as you have heard twice already, you haven't had a single child killed with a gun in a year and a half in this city. How I would pray that could happen in every city in America.

I want to compliment the mayor on his youth council and meeting with young people who are representative of the city every 6 weeks. And I'd like to thank the young woman from the council who appeared today, Lanita, on the program. I'd like to thank the young people who have been on probation who are making something of their lives. Young Terry Thompson was on our program today. I thank him for being a model of that.

What I want to say to you is that we cannot permit this to be only an achievement in Boston, because if it is only an achievement in Boston, it will be harder for Boston to continue to achieve. Sooner or later, what we have to do is to create the notion that it is normal for kids not to get shot, and so nobody claps when you say no kid has been killed.

Do you realize when I was the age of the young people who were on our program today—one is 19, I think the other is 17—if I had stood up as a young person there, wanting to be noticed, wanting to give a nice speech, wanting to give accounting of myself, and I had said, “We haven’t had a young person killed in our town for the last year and a half,” do you know what everybody would have said? “So what? What’s that fool talking about?” [Laughter] Today everybody claps. We have to keep working until the answer is, “So what?” That ought to be the answer, shouldn’t it? Isn’t that what you want? [Applause]

The truth is that all across our country children are still killing children for shoes, for jackets, for turf. And we can stop it. The truth is that Boston and just a few other cities have removed any fig leaf of excuse that we can’t do anything about it. You have now proved that it can be stopped, and therefore there is no excuse for not stopping it. And the United States of America, through the Congress, this year, should pass a law to give every community the tools that you have used to make your city safe again, so that we can do it everywhere in America.

I have four parts to the legislation that I am presenting Congress today. First, we have to break the backs of the gangs and punish juveniles who commit violent crimes with real severity. We have to finish putting 100,000 police on the street. And we have to make sure communities have the resources to prosecute people who violate the law. This bill will help communities to hire new prosecutors to directly deal with violent juveniles; to launch antigang units; to pursue, prosecute, and punish members who really hurt people. It will give judges more power to crack down on gang members who intimidate witnesses, and it will give Federal prosecutors for the first time the authority in appropriate circumstances to prosecute serious violent juveniles as adults.

The second thing we have to do is to keep drugs and guns away from our children. The Brady bill—listen to this—has already blocked more than 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers from buying a handgun. That’s an old small number. We’ll have some new ones in the next few days. But it doesn’t permit someone who commits a violent crime as a juvenile from buying a handgun once he or she turns 18. I think we should close that loophole and extend the

Brady bill so that anyone who commits a violent crime should not be given the right to buy a handgun.

Our plan would also require child safety locks on handguns to prevent unauthorized use and tragic accident. We ought to do that. We have begun an effort actually modeled on the Boston gun project in 17 other cities to crack down on those who illegally sell guns to young people.

And I said this in the former meeting—I want to say it again because I think most Americans don’t know it. The Treasury Department that license people who sell guns—they have to have a Federal license—has cracked down on that whole process in the last 3 years, and there are now fewer than half the licensed Federal gun dealers there were just 3 years ago. We are trying to get control of this process.

Our plan has the largest antidrug effort ever to stop drugs at their source, punish those who push them, and most importantly, to keep working to steer young people away from them. General McCaffrey, our Nation’s drug czar, has recommended that I have asked for funding to launch a massive national advertising campaign to deal with something that I had thought—wrongly—was basic, and that is how dangerous drugs are. It is clear that the main reason that drug use among teenagers is going up, while it is going down among people between the ages of 18 and 35, is that too many teenagers no longer believe that drugs are not only wrong and illegal but they can kill them. That—it is clear.

And it is clear that a lot of young adults who used to be a big part of the drug problem now do understand that they can die from this as well as be punished for it. And somehow we have got to bring the attitudes of the teenagers in line with the attitudes of the young adults so that we can deal with that. And we’ll be working with that.

I think every State should now begin to require drug tests of people for essential services like driver’s licenses. That would send a strong message out and be unpopular with a lot of young people who otherwise think their President is a pretty good fellow. [Laughter] But I think it’s the right thing to do.

The third thing we have to do is to reform the juvenile justice system so that it can handle today’s juvenile offenders. Most systems were designed to deal with truants and other minor problems, not violent problems. And we need

more people like this fine probation officer that introduced me today and more of those folks working with the police.

The story you have created here is the story we want to recreate in every community in the country. I want to hear more stories. I want it to be normal when I go some place and say, we go together, and we got into people's homes, and we visit with them at night, and they're glad to see us, and they understand that we're all on the same side and we're trying to save these kids' lives and give them a future. That's the story we want to hear everywhere.

We have to have more special court proceedings for young people, with greater flexibility to handle juveniles and tougher penalties to punish those who are really gone and then more flexibility and other opportunities to save those that ought to be saved. The real answer to this has got to be prevention. We have got to prevent these things from happening in the first place. That's what all the law enforcement people know.

Finally, we have to help our young people to stay on the right track. Our strategy will help to fund 1,000 new after-school initiatives in communities across the country to help keep schools open after school, on the weekends, in the summer. Listen to this: More than 50 percent of the juvenile crime in America occurs in the 3 hours after school is closed and before the parents are home. That's a stunning statistic. You take 3 or 4 hours out of the day, and you've cut the problem in half. Now, we don't want our young people left alone on street corners when they can be in school or at home. And we have to have ways that help our educators, our parents, our religious and community leaders to try to save these kids.

This anti-gang and youth violence strategy is based on what we know works. It is really a national framework to give other communities the chance to get the resources to do what you're trying to do in Boston. That is all it is. Tough when you should be tough; smart when you should be smart; compassionate when you should be compassionate; using everybody, building partnerships, letting everybody play a role; requiring communities to take responsibility for their own streets and their own kids and then giving you the outside support you need—that is all this bill does.

It is the critical next step in our fight to have a safe America and to give our children

a safe childhood. And I ask you here in Massachusetts to send a clear message. We know if this can be done in Boston, it can be done in every community, in every neighborhood of every size in the United States, and we ask the United States Congress to do what you've done here in Massachusetts: cross all party lines, throw politics away, throw the speeches in the trashcan, join hands. Let's do what works and make America the safe place it has to be.

Let me just make one other point to you. The citizens of this country have got to do their part—every citizen. And one of the things that I want to announce today that I'm very proud of is—that I think will help make all of you be better citizens and to support community policing, which is clearly the single most decisive element in bringing the crime rate, the neighborhood policing system.

Not very long ago I was made aware of a problem that—like a lot of problems ordinary people have that Presidents don't know about because our lives are so isolated—I learned that a lot of the 911 numbers were breaking down because 911 was being clogged up not only by genuine emergencies but by other legitimate calls that weren't really emergencies. And so I asked the Federal Communications Commission to set up a national community policing number for non-emergencies so that 911 calls would always go through when there was a matter of life and death, but all the other calls could be handled as well. This morning, the FCC announced that they are designating and setting aside the numbers 311 as a national non-emergency community policing number. And I believe it will help you.

So to all of you out here who are just citizens, I say: Use both numbers, and talk to your neighbors about using them in the right way. Be a part of a neighborhood watch. Support these community police officers, these probation officers, and do what you can to play your part. We'll do our part. You have to do your part.

If this country is going to be the country it ought to be in the 21st century, we can't have any more reports like the one that came out of the Center for Disease Control a few days ago saying that 75 percent of all the kids murdered in the industrial world are killed in the United States. What we've got to do is to create the record of the last year and a half in Boston for the United States. If you give our kids back their lives and their future, they

will make America the world's greatest country in the 21st century.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:22 p.m. at the Clark Athletic Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Thomas Menino of Boston; Paul Evans, Boston police commissioner; William Bulger,

president, and Sherry H. Penney, chancellor, University of Massachusetts; Gov. William Weld and Attorney General L. Scott Harshbarger of Massachusetts; and Lanita Tolentino and Terry Thompson, members of the Mayor's Youth Council. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Statement on the Death of Deng Xiaoping February 19, 1997

I was saddened today to learn of the death of Deng Xiaoping, China's senior statesman. Over the past two decades, Mr. Deng was an extraordinary figure on the world stage and the driving force behind China's decision to normalize relations with the United States. His historic visit to our country in 1979 laid the foundation for the rapid expansion of relations and cooperation between China and the United States.

Mr. Deng's long life spanned a century of turmoil, tribulation, and remarkable change in China. He spurred China's historic economic reform program, which greatly improved living standards in China and modernized much of the nation.

China today plays an important role in world affairs in no small part because of Mr. Deng's decision to open his country to the outside world. The continued emergence of China as a great power that is stable politically and open economically, that respects human rights and the rule of law, and that becomes a full partner in building a secure international order, is profoundly in America's interest and in the world's interest.

I want to convey my personal condolences to China's President Jiang Zemin, to Mr. Deng's widow, Zhuo Lin, and to the Chinese people.

Remarks on Medicaid Patient Protection and an Exchange With Reporters February 20, 1997

The President. Thank you. I was just sitting here thinking that, in the spirit of full disclosure, the Vice President and Secretary Shalala may have a particular vested interest in health care issues—that they both just got back from South Africa, and when they got back he got on a plane and went to Los Angeles to speak to the AFL-CIO convention; he got back at 4 o'clock this morning. And she got on a plane and went to New York with me to a welfare reform event. And I don't see how either one of them are still standing up. [*Laughter*] But they probably have a strong interest in what happened here today.

Let me thank, if I might, first of all, all the Members of Congress who are here from both

parties for their leadership on this issue; and Bruce Vladeck and Bruce Fried for what they have done; and the representatives of the groups over here to my right for being here and for supporting our endeavors.

Today I'm pleased to announce that we're taking steps to see that Medicaid beneficiaries continue to get access to the fullest quality health care. In recent years, the medical community and the insurance industry have joined to reform and improve American health care, working with us, and much of this progress has come through managed care, which emphasizes prevention, provides better care, and controls costs at the same time, when the plans are the best and the right kind of managed care plans.