

\$322 million, and my balanced budget plan promotes further increases in funding. We've expanded and improved Head Start, and we created an Early Head Start program for children age 3 or younger so that they could get the stimulation they need at those critical times.

From our research, we know that from the very first days of life a child is developing emotionally and intellectually, and how he or she does in those first 3 years of life will help to determine how a child does later in school and in life. That's why we need to begin teaching and nurturing our children before they go to school.

We want to sort through our research and get it to parents and to caregivers who work with children. So next week Hillary and I will bring together researchers, parents, and other experts for the White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning: What New Research on the Brain Tells Us About Our Youngest Children.

We will meet for a full day at the White House, with satellite hookups to 60 more sites around our Nation. This conference is an exciting and an enormous undertaking. It is a call to action to parents, to businesses, to caregivers, the media, the faith community, and the Government each to do their part to enhance the earliest years of life. It grows out of our commitment to find new ways to support parents and to help their children reach their God-given potential.

As part of that commitment, I also want to call today on the Members of Congress to do their part to come to the aid of our families. They can do that very simply by passing my expansion of the Family and Medical Leave Act.

This bill would allow workers up to 24 hours of unpaid leave each year to fulfill certain family obligations. It could allow a worker to attend a parent-teacher conference or to take a child to the pediatrician or to find quality child care or to care for an elderly relative.

Families occasionally need these small pieces of time to take care of their own. More than 12 million American workers have taken leave for reasons covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act since it became the very first bill I signed into law in 1993. It was needed then, it's needed now, and we need to improve on it. So I urge Congress to act soon on this legislation. Don't ask people to choose, ever, between being good workers and good parents. We can help them to do both. Pass the expanded family and medical leave act.

I believe this bill is so important that today I am asking all Federal departments and agencies to make expanded family and medical leave available to their workers immediately. Wherever possible, I want workers to have access right now to essential time off for family obligations.

I am committed to doing all we can to support families as they struggle to do right by their children. We know that the very earliest years will decide whether children grow up to become healthy and happy people. That's why we're giving parents time off to care for them, why we should extend the family leave law so millions more parents can have that opportunity, and why we must focus all our science, education, and public efforts to give our children the very best start in life.

Almost a century and a half ago, Oliver Wendell Holmes said a child's education should begin at least 100 years before he was born. What we do now can benefit generations of Americans to come. We can start with the smallest community, the family, and from there we can rebuild and renew the best in America by beginning with the best of America, our children.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE. The address was recorded at 6:55 p.m. on April 11 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 12.

Statement on the Decline in Violent Crime Statistics

April 11, 1997

Today the Department of Justice reported that violent crime dropped 12.4 percent in 1995.

Four years ago, we made a commitment to take our streets back from crime and violence.

We had a comprehensive plan: to put 100,000 new community police officers on the street and tough new penalties on the books; to steer young people away from crime, gangs, and drugs; and to keep guns out of the hands of criminals with the assault weapons ban and the Brady bill.

Today we learned that the first full year of our crime bill produced the largest drop in violent crime in 22 years. Earlier this year we learned that the Brady bill has already stopped 186,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers from purchasing handguns.

Our plan is working. Now we must press forward. Fighting the scourge of juvenile crime and violence is my top law enforcement priority

for the next 4 years. In February I submitted my Anti-Gang and Youth Violence Strategy to Congress. This bill declares war on gangs, with new prosecutors and tougher penalties; extends the Brady bill so violent teenage criminals will never have the right to purchase a handgun; and provides resources to keep schools open late, on weekends, and in the summer, so young people have something to say yes to.

I am hopeful that Congress will pass it without delay. We must keep the crime rate coming down and every child's prospect of a bright future going up.

NOTE: This statement was embargoed for release until 4:30 p.m. on April 13.

Remarks on the Apparel Industry Partnership *April 14, 1997*

Thank you very much. I would like to begin, first of all, by thanking all the members of this partnership, the cochairs, Paul Charron of Liz Claiborne and Linda Golodner of the National Consumers League, Jay Mazur of UNITE. I thank Kathie Lee Gifford, who has done so much to bring public attention to this issue. I thank the Members of Congress who are here: Congressman George Miller, Congressman Bernie Sanders, Congressman Lane Evans, Congressman Marty Martinez, and especially I thank my good friend Senator Tom Harkin, who first brought this issue to my attention a long time ago. Thank you very much, sir, and thank all of you for your passionate concern. I thank the former Secretary of Labor, Bob Reich, and Acting Secretary Cynthia Metzler and Secretary-designate Alexis Herman, who is here. And I thank Maria Echaveste and Gene Sperling for their work.

The announcement we make today will improve the lives of millions of garment workers around the world. As has now been painfully well documented, some of the clothes and shoes we buy here in America are manufactured under working conditions which are deplorable and unacceptable—mostly overseas, but unbelievably, sometimes here at home as well.

In our system of enterprise, which I have done my best to promote and advance, we sup-

port the proposition that businesses are in business to make a profit. But in our society, which we believe to be good and want to be better, we know that human rights and labor rights must be a part of the basic framework within which all businesses honorably compete.

As important as the fabric apparel workers make for us is the fabric of their lives, which is a part of the fabric of our lives, here at home and around the world. Their health and their safety, their ability to make a decent wage, their ability to bring children into this world and raise them with dignity and have their children see their parents working with dignity, that's an important part of the quality of our lives and will have a lot to do with the quality of our children's future.

Last August, when the Vice President and I brought together the leaders of some of our Nation's largest apparel and footwear companies and representatives of labor, consumer, human rights, and religious groups, I was genuinely moved at the shared outrage at sweatshop abuses and the shared determination to do something about it. That led to this apparel industry partnership. This partnership has reached an agreement—as already has been said—that will significantly reduce the use of sweatshop labor over the long run. It will give American