

## The President's Radio Address *July 11, 1998*

Good morning. This week General Barry McCaffrey, Attorney General Reno, and I were in Atlanta to launch an unprecedented antidrug campaign to ensure that when young people watch television, listen to the radio, read the newspaper, or surf the Web, they will get the powerful message that drugs are wrong, illegal, and can kill. They're both with me here today. This morning I'd like to talk to you about how we are working to sever the dangerous link between illegal drugs and violent crime.

There is no greater threat to our families and communities than the abuse of illegal drugs. For the last 5½ years, we've worked hard to fight drugs on every front: on our streets, in our schools, at our borders, in our homes. We've made real progress. Today there are 50 percent fewer Americans using drugs than just 15 years ago.

This morning the Justice Department will release a study that highlights several areas where we have more work to do. On the positive side, it shows that crack cocaine, which once ravaged whole neighborhoods, is now on the decline. In Manhattan, for example, the number of young criminals testing positive for crack cocaine dropped from 77 percent in 1988 to just 21 percent last year.

However, abuse of methamphetamine—after falling for 2 years—is now rising in the West and Southwest. Clearly, we have more to do. In six cities where methamphetamine is prevalent, we will help local governments attack this outbreak with the same community policing strategies that are allowing us to get crack cocaine off the streets.

The Justice Department study also shows that we must do more to make criminals make a clean break from illegal drugs. The study reports that between one-half and three-quarters of the people charged with crimes have drugs in their system at the time of their arrest. We already know that many of these offenders will commit more crimes if they are released with their drug habits intact. Now, if we want to continue to make our communities safer, we simply must get more crime-committing addicts to kick the habit.

In 1989 Attorney General Reno helped to pioneer one of the most successful ways of getting criminals to give up drugs. Her innovation, known as a drug court, gives nonviolent offenders a simple deal: If you submit to regular drug testing, enroll in court-supervised drug treatment, and keep yourself clean, you can stay out of jail; but if you fail tests or fail to show up, you'll be punished to the full extent of the law.

In 1994, through our historic crime bill, we helped to expand drug courts from a mere handful back then to more than 400 today. The results have been remarkable. In some cities, drug court participants have recidivism, or repeater rates, as low as 4 percent. So today we'll take another step to break the cycle of drugs and crime by awarding grants to build and enhance drug courts in more than 150 communities across our Nation. To stop the revolving door of crime and narcotics, we must make offenders stop abusing drugs.

Now Congress must get involved. I've asked Congress to fund an \$85 million testing and treatment initiative like the ones passed just this year in Connecticut and Maryland, initiatives that will help to support even more drug courts, as well as mandatory drug treatment and testing programs for probationers, prisoners, and parolees. So far, Congress has taken no action on this request, despite the indisputable evidence that mandatory drug testing and treatment works for probationers, prisoners, and parolees, and that drug courts clearly work.

I know all Members of Congress, regardless of party, want drug use and crime in America to keep going down. On Thursday Speaker Gingrich stood with us in Atlanta and pledged to attack the Nation's drug problem in a non-partisan manner. The best way to do that is for Congress to work with me in the remaining days of this legislative session to create even more drug courts and to expand mandatory testing and treatment of those who commit crimes.

By putting progress ahead of partisanship, we can enhance responsibility, fight drugs, cut crime, and strengthen our Nation for the 21st century.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

## Remarks at the National Treasures Tour Kickoff *July 13, 1998*

Thank you very much. Is this a great way to start the week, or what? *[Laughter]* Thank you, Secretary Heyman, Ms. Rimel, Mr. Mayor and members of the city council, Mr. Moe. Thank you, Denyce, as always, for being so wonderful. Thank you, Ralph Lauren, for this incredible act of generosity and, I think, foresight. And I want to thank the First Lady for once again creating something of enduring value to our country in this Millennium Project.

You know, Hillary mentioned this, but 1814 was not a particularly good year for America, and the British did burn the White House. And we've just finished a 15-year renovation of the White House, and we left two of the great stones unpainted to remind people that it only became the White House after the British burned it. And when the burn marks couldn't be scrubbed off, the beautiful stone had to be painted white to cover the memory of what had happened. It's rather nice, actually, to have a couple of the stones unpainted so that we don't completely forget.

Not since that time has the United States been invaded. And so the confidence of all the people who were involved was well-founded. Francis Scott Key wrote "The Star-Spangled Banner" in the midst of a very fierce battle. He was standing on the deck of a ship, behind enemy lines, looking into darkness, searching for the fate of the flag. The poem he wrote about it became our national anthem. If you remember the words and then you look at this massive flag, you can imagine what it must have been like in 1814, waving gallantly during the fight, standing unconquered in the dawn's early light. Think how you would have felt if you had seen it then.

This Star-Spangled Banner and all its successors have come to embody our country, what we think of as America. It may not be quite the same for every one of us who looks at it, but in the end, we all pretty much come out where the framers did. We know we have a

country founded on the then-revolutionary idea that all of us are created equal and equally entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that this whole country was put together out of an understanding that no individual can maximize the pursuit of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness alone, and so we had to join together to reinforce each other's efforts.

And then there was another great insight, which is that in the joining we couldn't repeat the mistakes of the monarchies from which we fled and give anyone absolute power over anyone else. And so we created this written Constitution to say that, okay, we've got to join together, and some people have to be our representatives and they should be given authority to make certain decisions, but never unlimited and never forever.

And I'd say that system has worked pretty well over the last 220-plus years. And that's what that flag embodies—at a moment when we could have lost it all, when the White House itself was burned, when a lot of people didn't think that we had such a good idea. And so now it's standing there, a little worse for the wear, but quite ready to be restored. And in that sense, it is a metaphor for our country, which is always ready to be restored.

When Hillary and I were talking about what we should do to commemorate the millennium and she came up with this phrase, "Honoring the past, and imagining the future," I loved it because it seems to me to be so much two sides of the same coin. You heard her only slightly making fun of me there about my obsession with the history of the United States and the White House and this great city. When I became President, I was often made fun of for my obsession about the future and trying to modernize the country. And to me, the two things are not inconsistent at all, because America is a country that has always been in the act of becoming.