

Statement on Earth Day *April 22, 1999*

Today, the last Earth Day of the 20th century, is an opportunity to celebrate America's achievements in protecting our environment and public health and to dedicate ourselves to meeting the environmental challenges of the new century ahead.

Working together, we have made tremendous progress since the first Earth Day in cleaning our air and water, protecting our communities and children from toxic threats, and preserving our precious lands. Americans have demonstrated time and again that we can safeguard our environment even as we grow our economy. I am proud of all that Vice President Gore and I have done to advance these efforts over the past 6 years.

Today the Vice President announces a national strategy to reduce air pollution and restore pristine skies in our national parks and wilderness areas so future generations can see and enjoy them in all their natural splendor. This is but one effort to leave this a better

land for our descendants. I join the Vice President in calling on Congress to approve our lands legacy initiative, dedicating permanent funding so that years from now Americans can continue protecting and restoring the deserts, mountains, coastlands, and plains that are so much a part of our Nation's heritage.

A new century brings new environmental challenges—perhaps the greatest is global warming. There is no clearer reminder that we are, indeed, all members of one global community. Only by acting together—as a nation, and in partnership with other nations—can we avert this common threat. This is a challenge the Vice President and I are fully committed to meeting.

It is my sincere hope that when Americans gather 100 years from now to celebrate Earth Day, they will remember us as dedicated stewards of our Nation's air, water, and land, and will instill the same spirit in all those who follow.

Remarks on School Safety and an Exchange With Reporters *April 23, 1999*

The President. Good morning. Before I leave to go to the NATO Summit this morning, I'd like to say just a few more words about the tragedy in Littleton and the steps we're taking to make all our schools safer.

The images from Colorado have become painfully familiar, the terrified children, the racing ambulances, the grieving families. We saw them last year, in Pearl, West Paducah, Jonesboro, Springfield. We were reminded again this week that none of our communities is immune to senseless violence.

Still, it is important to remember and to remind our children that the vast majority of our schools are safe. Nearly everywhere in America a child still is safer in school than anywhere else in the community.

But this week's tragedy reminds us again that one act of violence is one too many. We must do more to keep guns out of the hands of chil-

dren, to help our young people express their anger and alienation with words, not weapons, to prevent violence from shattering the peace of our schoolyards.

I've spoken to Attorney General Reno, who was at the scene yesterday to assist law enforcement in their investigation and to offer comfort to the students and the families. I also talked with Dr. DeStefano and the school board last evening for a few minutes to share some thoughts with them and to express my appreciation to them for their efforts.

The Justice Department today will make \$1½ million from our crime victims trust fund available to help the communities assist the victims in their long journey toward recovery. And we will do more.

Last October, at our White House Conference on School Safety, I launched a new initiative to bring more of the same community policing

that is doing so much to reduce crime on our streets to our schools. Today I'm pleased to announce the first of the grants funding these community police will be awarded to 336 schools and communities to help hire more than 600 police officers. Like their counterparts on the streets, these school officers will work closely with the citizens they serve, with students, teachers, and parents, to improve campus security, to counsel troubled youth, to mediate conflicts before they escalate into violence.

I want to thank Senator Chuck Robb for his strong leadership on this issue. By the end of the year we hope to have 2,000 new officers in our schools, and I encourage all communities to apply for these grants.

I also want to take this opportunity to remind communities that they have until June 1st to apply for the Federal Safe Schools-Healthy Students funds, to help them put in place comprehensive violence prevention programs. Those of you who were with me yesterday in Alexandria at T.C. Williams High School know how important the students there believe such a program is. These funds can be used for everything from establishing conflict resolution groups to hiring more mental health counselors, to establishing new mentoring programs, to installing metal detectors and other security equipment.

By taking actions to prevent future acts of violence in our schools, we can best honor the memories of those who lost their lives.

Thank you very much.

Legislative Initiatives/Kosovo

Q. Mr. President, you didn't mention gun control. Are you going to do more on gun control?

Q. To be clear, sir, do all hostilities in Kosovo have to end before there can be consideration of ground troops, sir?

The President. First of all, I know you understand I've got to run over there and meet all the people who are coming. We will have more legislative initiatives to announce in the days ahead. As I said a couple of days ago, we will have some legislative responses and efforts we have been working on for some time, actually.

On the other, I think our conditions are clear. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:18 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, prior to his departure for the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to Jon DeStefano, president, board of education, Jefferson County, CO.

Remarks at the Opening of the North Atlantic Council Meeting on Kosovo *April 23, 1999*

Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary General. Mr. Secretary General, fellow leaders, let me begin by welcoming you warmly to the United States. We are honored to host this 50th Anniversary Summit of NATO. We meet to honor NATO's past, to chart its future, to reaffirm our mission in Kosovo, where NATO is defending our values and our vision of a Europe free, undivided, and at peace.

Today we send a clear message of unity and determination: to sustain our air campaign for as long as it takes; to stand firm in our conditions for ending it; to pursue diplomatic initiatives to meet those conditions; to increase political and economic pressure against the regime in Belgrade; to stand by the frontline nations threatened by Belgrade's actions; and to work

with them for stability, democracy, and prosperity in southeastern Europe, so that when Mr. Milosevic's vision for the future is defeated, a better one can rise in its place.

We will seek to do this together with our European partners, and with Ukraine and with Russia. We will make clear what is at stake. Mr. Milosevic's forces burn and loot homes and murder innocent people; our forces deliver food and shelter and hope to the displaced. Mr. Milosevic fans the flames of anger between nations and peoples; we are an Alliance of 19 nations, uniting 780 million people of many faiths and ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds. Mr. Milosevic knows only one way to achieve his aims, through force; we have done