

Memorandum on the Combined Federal Campaign of the National Capital Area

May 12, 1999

*Memorandum for Heads of Executive
Departments and Agencies*

Subject: 1999 Combined Federal Campaign of the National Capital Area

I am delighted that Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala has agreed to serve as the Chair of the 1999 Combined Federal Campaign of the National Capital Area. I ask you to enthusiastically support the CFC by personally chairing the campaign in your agency and appointing a top official as your vice chair.

The Combined Federal Campaign is an important way for Federal employees to support thousands of worthy charities. Public servants not only contribute to the campaign but also assume leadership roles to ensure its success.

Your personal support and enthusiasm will help positively influence thousands of employees and will guarantee another successful campaign.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 13. An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum.

Remarks on Senate Action on Gun Control Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters

May 13, 1999

The President. Good morning. On Monday we brought parents and students, religious leaders and educators, and representatives of the entertainment and gun industries to the White House to lay the groundwork for a national campaign to reduce youth violence.

We agreed that this was no time to point fingers or to pass the buck, but instead a time for everyone to take responsibility. Parents must take greater responsibility for their children's actions and get more involved in their children's lives. The entertainment industry must do its part.

Even now, in the aftermath of Littleton, there are some in the entertainment industry who say there is nothing they can or should do. But that is wrong. Hundreds of studies show that the aggregate impact of sustained exposure to violence over the media to children, principally on television but also in the movies and now in video games, generally desensitize children to violence and its consequences, and therefore, make the more vulnerable children more violence-prone.

The entertainment community is helping parents to limit children's exposure to violence. It should also not market indiscriminate violence to children. If this is a job for all of society, the entertainment industry is very much a part of our society and must do its part.

Perhaps the most courageous statement at the summit, however, came from representatives of the gun manufacturers. They vowed to be part of the solution, to work with us to pass sensible measures to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children.

One of the most important measures we agreed on was legislation to require background checks at gun shows. In the past 5 years, the Brady law has stopped more than a quarter million felons, fugitives, and stalkers from buying handguns. But there's a loophole in the law: tens of thousands of guns are sold every year at gun shows without any background check at all.

Last night a narrow majority of the Senate voted to preserve the dangerous gun show loophole. For the life of me, I can't figure out how they did it or why they passed up this chance

to save lives. Just last November, over 70 percent of the voters in Florida, not generally thought of as a liberal State, voted to close the gun show loophole.

I ask the Senate to reconsider its decision. There is simply no excuse for letting criminals get arms at gun shows they can't get at gun stores.

Today the Senate will have another chance to debate commonsense measures that most gunmakers and sportsmen and ordinary citizens would welcome. The American people are watching this debate. They care very much about the result.

As we all saw Monday, the gun manufacturing industry is ready to make progress. The country is ready to make progress. The Congress should be ready to make progress. We can't expect parents, young people, and the media to take responsibility if we in Government aren't willing to do our part.

Thank you very much.

Kosovo Funding Legislation

Q. Mr. President, the Kosovo money bill—is it getting so loaded down that you may have to veto it?

The President. Well, I believe that we're actually making progress. I got a report from Mr. Podesta this morning, and I think there is some effort to trim down the bill some and to get it in position where I can sign it, and I hope it will be done quickly. We need the funds now, and we need the demonstration of support for the Kosovar refugees and for Macedonia and Albania now. It needs to be done as quickly as possible. And I'm, frankly, pretty encouraged this morning.

Q. Do you think the American people understand the war, Mr. President? Support for the war seems to be declining, according to national polls.

The President. I think they do understand it. I think they understand that it is overwhelmingly a humanitarian problem. I think they understand that there's a great difference between ethnic cleansing and mass slaughter and ethnic conflicts, which are so prevalent in other parts of the world. I think they understand that this is not something the United States is doing alone but with the strong involvement and leadership of our European allies. And I believe they understand that we have an interest in seeing peace and freedom in Europe.

I think they are probably frustrated that it's not already over, but I said in the beginning we have to be prepared to pay the price of time. And the most important thing is that our children will understand it years from now if we stand against ethnic cleansing and we can turn the world against it, and they will not forgive us years from now if we do not.

Thank you.

Q. Central American aid, Mr. President?

Q. Are there offsets that you would accept?

Q. Will Yeltsin be impeached? What happens if Yeltsin goes?

Q. Central American aid—

The President. That is there, and I hope we get it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, prior to his departure for Fort McNair, MD. A portion of the exchange could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States at Fort McNair, Maryland

May 13, 1999

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you, Commander Pouliot. I am grateful to you and to Veterans of Foreign Wars for your support of America's efforts in Kosovo.

General Chilcoat, Secretary Albright, Secretary Cohen, Secretary West, National Security Adviser Berger, Deputy Secretary Goyer, Gen-

eral Shelton and the Joint Chiefs, and to the members of the military and members of the VFW who are here. I'd also like to thank Congressman Engel and Congressman Quinn for coming to be with us today.

I am especially honored to be here with our veterans who have struggled for freedom in