

call, and both things are important. One is, they know they won't be identified; and two is, they know there will be some responsible person to actually follow up on it. So I think that is something that other schools should consider doing.

[A student asked the President if he thought there was a difference between owning a hunting rifle or owning a handgun or assault rifle.]

The President. Well, first of all, a lot of avid sports people would tell you that they do some of that with handguns, too. But generally, yes, I think there's a big difference between assault weapons and other weapons. Some people claim they use them for sporting purposes, but no one needs them. And there is a difference between handguns and other weapons, because handguns are used more, they're easier to conceal, and they're more likely to be used for illegal purposes and less likely to be used for

legal purposes. Therefore, I think it is legitimate to have higher standards on owning them and greater requirements on background checks and greater requirements on whether they should be registered or not. That's what I believe.

NOTE: The interview began at approximately 7:05 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House, moving later to the Roosevelt Room for the discussion with students. In his remarks, the President referred to President Martti Ahtisaari of Finland; Special Envoy and former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin of Russia; President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); Columbine High School gunmen Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris; and Columbine shooting victim Isaiah Shoels. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady and the student participants.

Remarks at a Breakfast for Representative Nick J. Rahall II June 4, 1999

Thank you. First of all, I want to say to Congressman Rahall and his family, and Congressman Wise and Mr. O'Neill—Congressman Patrick Kennedy was, a few moments ago, was here with us downstairs. I am very honored to be here and glad to have a chance to come here for Nick Rahall.

You know, he was talking all about the burdens of being 50. I thought it was burdensome, too, until I carefully considered the alternative. [Laughter] And I have enjoyed my advancing years ever since.

I want to say, too, a special word of thanks to the people who are here from West Virginia, a State that has been uncommonly good and generous to me and to Vice President Gore in two elections and in the times in between, a State that has struggled with a lot of economic problems from coal to steel that we have been working hard to address and will continue to do so. And I want to thank all of you for being here for Nick.

We both ran for Congress when we were 27. The only difference is I got beat, and he got elected. [Laughter] I've often wondered what would have happened in my life if I had

been elected to Congress when I was 27. [Laughter] The one thing I did miss was the chance to serve with Tip O'Neill, a man I admire very much, and I'm very glad that Tom is here today.

There are many things that I appreciate about Nick Rahall. I appreciate the work he's done in transportation. I appreciate the fact that he and Bob both have stood by me in pursuing an economic strategy that has really brought our country back and given us the biggest surplus in history and given us a chance not only to pay down our debt but to save Social Security and Medicare for the baby boom generation in a way that does not require any tax increases whatever and can, in fact, enable us to strengthen our economy. And I'm very grateful for that.

I'm very grateful that he has supported the efforts that I have tried to make to promote peace around the world. And like Nick and Bob, I hope that the announcement of the last few hours, the last day, in Kosovo portends a genuine agreement that will be honestly implemented and that will lead to real reversal of the ethnic cleansing there, that the refugees will

be able to go home in security and self-government, that the international force will be able to go in, that the Serb forces will be withdrawn.

I ask you to be both thankful and cautious. I have dealt with the Serbian leader now for over 6 years. There have been many agreements, and the only one that was kept was the one, in Bosnia, where we had a force on the ground and a specific agreement. It has a lot in common with this, and we're hopeful, but we need to see real action here.

I also want to thank Nick for his work for peace in the Middle East and for sensitive and fair treatment for Arab-Americans and in American foreign policy, for the legitimate interests of all the people of the Middle East. He has done a very, very good job, and I'm very proud of him for that.

I think it's interesting—because I come from a State that is demographically very much like West Virginia—in the 1980 census, Arkansas and West Virginia had the highest percentage of people living in their State who were born there of any two States in America and, I believe, the highest percentage of people who identified themselves as Baptists. *[Laughter]*

And we were an awful lot alike. We gave—when President Carter ran for President in 1976, next to his home State of Georgia, Arkansas and West Virginia gave him the second and third-highest percentages of the vote. And West Virginia has been in the top five States for me, in both elections.

They're hardworking people that have overcome great difficulties. They're not, as compared with many other States, particularly diverse. And I think it's a real tribute to Nick Rahall that he has spent a lot of time, and that his constituents have supported him in spending time, trying to make us sensitive to people who come from different racial and ethnic and religious backgrounds. Because the United States, of all the nations in the world, is perhaps the most blessed, going in to the 21st century, because we live in a global economy and a global society, and because we are so diverse.

But if you look around the world today, whether it's in the Middle East or in the Balkans, in Kosovo, and before that in Bosnia, it is truly amazing that as we contemplate the miracles of the 21st century—the spread of technology, the breathtaking advances in chemistry and in biology, the decoding of the human gene, and the dramatic potential for increasing both

the length and quality of life—that we are bedeviled today by the oldest—the oldest—demon of human society: people's vulnerability to fear those who are different from them, who aren't part of their tribe, their crowd. And fear can turn quickly to hatred; hatred can turn quickly to dehumanization; dehumanization can turn quickly to justifying killing people who are different from us.

And we have an obligation to lead the world away from that. That's what we've been trying to do in Kosovo. But I would also say we have an obligation, if we want to do good things around the world, to be as good as we can be here at home.

This morning Hillary and I appeared on "Good Morning America" with about 40 young people, to talk about violence against children in our society, what can be done in the aftermath of the terrible events at Littleton. I will say this: I have never in my public life seen as much openness by so many people across party and other lines to try do something that really will make a difference to give our children a safer future. So in the time I have left as President, I assure you, I will be devoting an enormous amount of effort to that worthy cause.

Again, the last point I would like to make is this: There is a great deal still to be done in this country that we should do before—before—the new millennium and before I leave office in 2001. A great deal that I have done and would like to do would be totally impossible without Members of Congress who share our values and our vision and our ideas for the future. And that's another reason I'm proud to be here.

The final thing I want you to know is this—maybe most of you know this. Last year, in 1998, we knew we had a chance to make an historic election. And it had been since 1822—since 1822—that the party of the President in office—that his party had picked up seats in the House of Representatives in the second term of the Presidency. Since the Civil War, even counting first terms, it's only happened twice before, under Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt. We were being outspent last time by \$100 million.

Nick Rahall stepped forward and gave a substantial contribution from his campaign account to other members and other candidates who were out there running, that had a pivotal impact on what is a truly historical election that

we had in 1998, because we not only had good candidates and we not only were running on saving Social Security and the Patients' Bill of Rights and building modern schools and keeping our economy going, we had to have some way of getting that message out. It's unprecedented for Members on our side to do that, and he did it. And I will never forget that as long as I live.

So for all those reasons, I'm honored to be here with him and with the next Governor of West Virginia.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. at the National Democratic Club. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas P. O'Neill III, son of former House Speaker Tip O'Neill; President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); and Representative Robert E. Wise, Jr., candidate for Governor of West Virginia.

Remarks on Presenting the President's Award for Furthering Employment of People With Disabilities

June 4, 1999

Situation in the Balkans

The President. Thank you very much, Jill. Secretary Herman; Chairman Coelho; Mr. Dart; to Janice Lachance, head of our Office of Personnel Management. Ladies and gentlemen, I have looked forward to this day, and I am delighted to see you all here. I'll have more to say about the others who are up here with me in a moment.

This is my only opportunity to appear before the press today, so I hope you will also indulge me if I say a few words about the recent developments in Kosovo. For 72 days now, we have been engaged with our Allies in a difficult but just and necessary military campaign, with three simple goals: the return of over 800,000 innocent Kosovar refugees to their homes, with safety and self-government; the withdrawal of Serb forces; and the deployment of an international security force, with NATO at its core, to protect all the people of that shattered land.

Yesterday the Serbian authorities indicated they would accept those conditions. Russian Special Envoy Chernomyrdin and Finnish President Ahtisaari played instrumental and courageous roles in making this possible. I am grateful to them, and so should all Americans be.

Tomorrow military officials from NATO and Serbia will meet to work out the details of the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo. This is the next necessary step for implementation of our conditions. I'm pleased that it will take

place, and I hope the talks will proceed professionally and expeditiously.

As I said yesterday, our diplomatic and military efforts will continue until we see Serb forces begin to withdraw in a full-scale manner. Our experience in the Balkans teaches us that true peace can only come when progress in discussions is followed by progress on the ground.

At the same time, there is an enormous opportunity to be seized here, a chance to shift our focus from defeating something evil to building something good; a chance to work with our Allies to bring a stable and prosperous and democratic southeastern Europe, in which people are never again singled out for destruction simply because of their religious faith or their ethnic origin. This is a goal that has been worth fighting for over the last weeks, a goal which must be uppermost in our minds as we make sure our conditions are met, a goal we must work for with steadfast determination in the months and in the years to come.

And I believe that the overwhelming majority of Americans share this goal. We do not want our children to grow up in a world which is dominated by people who believe they can kill innocent civilians because of the way they worship God or the way they were born.

Disability Employment Awards

Fifty years ago Harry Truman, the very first President to present the awards that we present today, set a goal for our Nation. I'd like to