

evaluate these proposals solely in terms of Columbine. What you should say is, would it make a difference?

Why do I think one more will make a difference? Because if you close the gun show loophole, then all gun sales will be subject to the same background checks the Brady bill imposes on gun dealers today, which has resulted in a half-million felons, fugitives, and stalkers not getting handguns. And the gun crime rate today is 35 percent lower than it was 7 years ago. That's my argument.

Mr. Brokaw. Mr. President, thank you very much.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Brokaw. On behalf of NBC News and MSNBC, I certainly appreciate this attentive and very articulate audience, and especially the President of the United States to take time out of his busy schedule to address this issue that, clearly, so deeply divides so many Americans. But I hope that with this dialog here today and many others like this in the course of the coming months in Colorado and across the country, we can take that one step toward some common ground.

This, after all, is a debate about much more than just gun safety, gun laws; it's about who we are and what we want our children to think of us in the future. Thank you all very much for joining us here today.

[Following a commercial break, Mr. Brokaw invited the President to make further remarks.]

The President. I think this country would make better decisions across the whole range of issues if we could all find a way to give each other forums like this, because I have seen repeatedly how, on this gun issue, each side—once one side strikes a personal blow, then the other one wants to strike a personal blow back. And before you know it, we're all into demonizing each other, which is—it may make for good television—no offense—*[laughter]*—but it makes for bad decisions.

We're not talking about—there's no need in us demonizing each other. And I think we have to recognize that most of the advocates of strong gun control and most of the advocates—opponents of it really come out of different cultures and have different experiences which lead them to the positions they hold. And what we've got to do—I've spent a lot of time, since I came out of—basically out of the hunting and sport shooting culture, I've spent a lot of time explaining to the people on my side of this why the people on the other side think the way they do and argue the way they do and feel the way they do. And I think it's important that we try to minimize calling each other names, and try to hear what each other is saying. And I thought the gentleman who is the gun dealer today made some particularly cogent points. And I appreciate what you said.

And I also want to say, not every problem has an easy answer. I don't have an answer to what the gentleman up there said, that he quit using Smith & Wesson guns because he and his wife didn't want to spend 2 hours every night that they didn't have running their small business to load up 400, 500 guns. There's not an easy answer to every one of these things.

But we'll get through this, and we can make this the safest big country in the world if we keep listening to each other and dealing with each other respectfully, the way all of you have today. And I just want to thank you. And I want to thank all the officials who came here today for the role they played in this.

Thank you.

NOTE: The townhall meeting began at 1 p.m. at the University of Denver. In his remarks, the President referred to Gov. Bill F. Owens and State Attorney General Kenneth Salazar of Colorado; and Charlton Heston, president, National Rifle Association. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Statement on the America's Private Investment Companies Initiative April 12, 2000

Last fall in Chicago, Speaker Hastert and I agreed to work together on a bipartisan legisla-

tive initiative to bring new private investment to America's economically disadvantaged

communities. Today I am pleased to report that we have made some progress on that pledge. Passage of the APIC's initiative by the House Banking and Financial Services Committee represents the first crucial step in this bipartisan effort. America's Private Investment Companies (APIC's) will spur as much as \$1.5 billion in new private investment in new markets across America. They represent a smart, innovative way

to help ensure that all communities share in America's economic prosperity.

I would like to thank Representatives LaFalce, Leach, Lazio, Kanjorski, and Baker for their leadership in moving this legislation forward. I look forward to continue working with Congress on comprehensive legislation to help renew America's communities and tap into the full potential of our new markets this year.

Statement on Organ Donation Legislation

April 12, 2000

I am pleased by Senator Frist and Senator Kennedy's announcement that they have reached a compromise on legislation that moves our Nation forward to promote greater equity and effectiveness in the allocation of our Nation's organ supply. This compromise takes a

first step towards ensuring that those Americans most in need of receiving these life-saving resources will be able to better access them. At the same time, we must redouble our efforts to encourage voluntary donation by all Americans.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the American Society of Newspaper Editors

April 13, 2000

The President. Thank you very much, Chris. And thank you for asking me again—I think. [Laughter] I want to say I am delighted to be here. And I'm glad you said it was the sixth time. I knew I had been here more than half the time, but we were talking on the way in about how when you live a busy life, how memory fades. And I've enjoyed these six occasions, or at least the previous five, and I think I'll enjoy this one.

I was asking myself on the way over here, why am I doing this? I'm not running for anything. [Laughter] And I read the Vice President's speech to you and the jokes that he made, the joke he made about Chris and the Orange County Register. I was so delighted to carry Orange County, I didn't care whether the newspaper was for us or not. [Laughter] And surprised.

But I am delighted to be here. And I want to talk primarily today about the present debate over the budget and tax proposals on Capitol Hill. But I would like to say one thing very

briefly at the outset about the census and to ask for your help.

Because the census is, at its core, information about who we are as a democracy, I would imagine everyone in this room is particularly interested in it. The information especially from the long form helps hometowns do everything from design mass transit systems to provide 911 emergency services. The census helps us to calculate cost-of-living increases for Social Security, military retirement, veterans' pensions. It serves as a foundation for a variety of economic surveys, including the monthly jobs reports, and it's important in the calculation of the Consumer Price Index.

So far, about three of five census forms have been returned. That means about 40 percent have not. We want everyone to count, and we hope that you will help us to reach them. So I would just say, anything you can do to help encourage the people who read your papers to fill out their census forms, every one of them, would be very much appreciated.