

And it's certainly worth everything we can possibly do.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:25 p.m. on the West Grounds at the Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Gilbert G. Gallegos, president, Steve Young, vice president, and James O. Pasco, Jr.,

executive director, Fraternal Order of Police; Lmae Tull, president, Grand Lodge Fraternal Order of Police Auxiliary; and singer Tony Bennett. The Peace Officers Memorial Day and Police Week proclamation of May 11 and the Executive order of June 29 on establishment of the Presidential Medal of Valor for Public Safety Officers are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Memorandum on Honoring Extraordinary Valor of Our Public Safety Officers

May 15, 2000

Memorandum for the Attorney General

Subject: Honoring Extraordinary Valor of our Public Safety Officers

Over the past 7 years, the cooperative efforts of law enforcement officers on the Federal, State, and local level have resulted in dramatic declines in our crime rate. I am proud of the key initiatives my Administration has proposed and supported that have given law enforcement officers the resources they need to fight crime. Through our Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program, we have funded the hiring of over 100,000 more police officers to work at the local level to build partnerships and combat crime. We have fought for tools to keep guns out of the wrong hands, and passed the Brady Law that has stopped over half a million felons, fugitives, and domestic abusers from buying guns. We have taken more criminals off the street with tougher penalties and we have helped States build more prisons to keep dangerous criminals behind bars. And we have given our young people positive alternatives to prevent crime in the first place.

As a result of our crime-fighting strategy and the cooperative efforts of law enforcement at the Federal, State, and local level, America has experienced dramatic declines in our crime rate. The overall crime rate has dropped for the eighth year in a row, the longest continuous decline on record. The national homicide rate is at its lowest level in over 30 years. By making crime prevention, reduction, and prosecution a top priority, we have created a renewed sense of security in our Nation's cities, towns, and neighborhoods.

This extraordinary record of success has not come without a heavy cost. Every day, the brave men and women of law enforcement put themselves on the front line of our battle to reduce crime. Each year, there are countless acts of individual courage and heroism by officers in the field. Although the majority of these acts do not result in any permanent disability or death, sadly, each year we mourn the loss of those who sacrificed their lives for this cause. The annual Police Week and National Peace Officers Memorial Day commemorations allow all Americans to pay tribute to the brave men and women of law enforcement. Few among us are put in the daily jeopardy that peace officers can find themselves in during even seemingly routine policing activity. To find examples of this courage, we need to look no further than the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial where the names of more than 14,000 officers who gave their lives to protect ours are carved in stone and memorialized for the ages.

In order to recognize the exemplary work carried out by public safety officers at all levels of government, the Congress should immediately pass legislation to create a Medal of Valor for exceptional valor and courage demonstrated by our public safety officers. Unfortunately, such legislation has remained stalled for months.

These heroes should not have to wait any longer for the recognition they deserve. So as we await the passage of legislation, I hereby direct you to develop a plan to create a Presidential award through Executive action to recognize public safety officers who have exhibited extraordinary valor above and beyond the call of duty. The award shall be awarded annually

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by the President. In developing this plan, where appropriate, you should consult with other relevant Government departments and agencies. The plan should designate a group of experts representing all aspects of the public safety sector, management, and labor, including law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency services officers who will submit written recommendations to you of candidates who exemplify the valor this award recognizes. Further, the plan should establish criteria for recommending nominees for the award of valor, as well as the design of the award itself. I direct

you to report back to me with this plan within 30 days.

All Americans can feel pride in the work done each and every day by those who promise to protect and serve. It is my hope that with the creation of this award of valor the efforts of public safety officers are more publicly recognized and appreciated by our Nation.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: The Executive order of June 29 on establishment of the Presidential Medal of Valor for Public Safety Officers is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on the Supreme Court Decision Striking Down a Provision of the Violence Against Women Act

May 15, 2000

I am deeply disappointed by the Supreme Court's decision today in *United States v. Morrison*. In this case, the Court struck down the civil remedy provision contained in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). In 1994, as part of comprehensive crime control legislation, I signed into law the Violence Against Women Act. This historic, important piece of Federal legislation contains a broad array of groundbreaking laws to combat violence against women. VAWA passed Congress with bipartisan support.

The Supreme Court's decision today does not affect the viability of VAWA as a whole. It does not affect any of the VAWA grant programs nor does it affect Federal criminal provisions that punish interstate domestic violence and stalking crimes. The Supreme Court did, however, invalidate one important provision of the

Violence Against Women Act that gave victims of gender-motivated violence the ability to sue their attackers for lost earnings, medical expenses, and other damages. Because I continue to believe that there should be remedies for victims of gender-motivated violence, we plan to study the Supreme Court's decision in *Morrison* to determine the best means to help these victims.

VAWA has provided funds to communities across the Nation to address the tragedy of violence against women. These funds have made a crucial difference in women's lives. Unfortunately, VAWA funding is only authorized until the end of fiscal year 2000. I have made the reauthorization and strengthening of VAWA a top legislative goal for this year. If we work together, we can enact a bill that will keep women in this country safe from violence.

Remarks to the 1999 Women's National Basketball Association Champion Houston Comets

May 15, 2000

The President. Please be seated. Good afternoon, and welcome to the Rose Garden. I want to thank the Marine Brass for playing for us

and bringing us in, and also thank three Members from the Texas delegation for being here: Representative Ken Bentsen, Representative