

school; yet, she chooses to teach in a school in an underprivileged rural area because she believes that devoted teachers and principals can make a difference in the lives of students from every background.

Teaching is a tradition in Betsy's family. Her grandmother was a teacher. Her mother taught Sunday school for 50 years. In her own career, Betsy Rogers is known for a commitment to students that goes beyond school hours. She gives before-school tutoring to students who need extra help learning to read and volunteers on school committees after hours. She attends sporting events and birthday parties for her students. She helps the families of disadvantaged students through local church and community groups.

Betsy also encourages her students to help each other. As she puts it, "No matter what your circumstances in life, you can always give." Teachers like Betsy Rogers put children on the road to becoming good citizens and, as importantly, successful adults. They show students that there are

a lot of caring people ready to help along the way.

I thank every one of our Teachers of the Year for your determination and your love. Each of you is an example of excellence in the classroom. Each of you is a model for a young teacher to follow. And your students are fortunate to have talented and good-hearted people in their lives, and our Nation is fortunate to have you in the classroom. Thank you for your work. May God bless what you do.

And now I'm pleased to introduce the National Teacher of the Year, Betsy Rogers.

[At this point, Helen Elizabeth Dawson Rogers made brief remarks.]

The President. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:25 a.m. in the First Lady's Garden at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of National Teacher of the Year Helen Elizabeth Dawson Rogers.

Remarks on Signing the Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools To End the Exploitation of Children Today Act of 2003

April 30, 2003

Thanks a lot for the warm welcome, and welcome to the Rose Garden and the White House. What a beautiful day. I'm glad you all are here, and I'm pleased that you could join us on a day a vital piece of legislation becomes the law of the land.

I appreciate the hard work of the Congress. I want to thank the Members of the Congress, the Senate, who are here and the Members of the House of Representatives who are here. I want to thank you all for your very hard work in getting this bill to my desk as quickly as you did.

This law, the PROTECT Act of 2003, will greatly assist law enforcement in tracking criminals who would harm our children

and will greatly help in rescuing the youngest victims of crime. With my signature, this new law will formally establish the Federal Government's role in the Amber Alert system and will make punishment for Federal crimes against children more severe. This law carries forward a fundamental responsibility of public officials at every level of government to do everything we can to protect the most vulnerable citizens from dangerous offenders who prey on them.

I want to thank our Attorney General, John Ashcroft, for his leadership on this issue. He is strong. He is steady, and he

will see to it that this law is executed in its fullest.

I appreciate so very much Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, who worked hard to make sure this bill encompassed a lot, that it fulfilled a lot, that it met the aspirations of those who are anxious to make sure our children are protected. Chairman, you did fine work. Thank you very much. I appreciate the members of your committee who are here today. And I appreciate the fact that chairman Senator Orrin Hatch is with us as well, who shepherded the bill through the United States Senate in record time. Mr. Chairman, thank you for your hard work as well.

I appreciate my friend, the Governor of Connecticut, Johnny Rowland, being with us today. Johnny, thank you. Thank you for your concerns about the children of the State of Ohio—of Connecticut. The attorney general, Jerry Kilgore, is here from the Commonwealth of Virginia. Attorney General, thanks for coming. Of course it's always good to see the Mayor—the Mayor of Washington, DC, Anthony Williams. There are no potholes in front of the White House today. [Laughter] It's good to see you, Mr. Mayor.

Also with us today are some families who understand better than most the need for this law. In your great suffering and loss, you have found the courage to come to the defense of all children. Because of you, this critical measure is now becoming law. Because of you, children and parents you may never meet will be spared from the harm and anguish your families have known. We are honored to have you all here today.

When a child is reported missing, that case becomes the matter of the most intensive and focused efforts by law enforcement. Entire communities join in the search, and through unrelenting efforts, many children have been saved. Amber Alerts have become an increasingly important tool in rescuing kidnaped children, by

quickly getting key information about the missing child and information about the suspect out into the public through radio broadcasts or highway signs or other means. An Amber Alert adds thousands of citizens to the search in the crucial early hours.

At present, statewide Amber Alert systems exist in 41 States. The bill I will sign this afternoon authorizes matching grants to those and other States to help ensure that we have effective Amber Alerts wherever they are needed.

Last year, at my direction, Attorney General John Ashcroft appointed an Amber Alert coordinator to oversee this nationwide effort. This new law formally establishes that position and empowers the coordinator to set clear and uniform voluntary standards for the use of Amber Alerts across our country.

It is important to expand the Amber Alert systems so police and sheriffs' departments gain thousands or even millions of allies in the search for missing children. Every person who would think of abducting a child can know that a wide net will be cast. They may be found by a police cruiser or by the car right next to them on a highway. These criminals can know that any driver they pass could be the one that spots them and brings them to justice.

This is exactly what happened last summer in California when several drivers heard an Amber Alert over the radio and soon passed a vehicle meeting the description they heard. Within hours, two teenage girls were rescued and their abductor cornered by the police. We're so happy these two young ladies are healthy and with us today, Tamara Brooks and Jacqueline Marris.

Tamara's brother is somewhere around here. He showed me—guess what happened to him today? One, he brings his little sister to the White House, and secondly, today he was accepted to West Point. He's following in the footsteps of two older sisters.

The new law also confronts an evil that is too often a cause of child abuse and abduction in America, the evil of child pornography. In the past, prosecutors have been hindered by not having all the tools needed to prosecute criminals who create child pornography. Under the PROTECT Act, we've seen images of children, even those created with computer technology, will now be illegal, giving prosecutors an important new tool. Obscene images of children, no matter how they are made, incite abuse, raise the dangers to children, and will not be tolerated in America.

The new law will also strengthen Federal penalties for child kidnaping and other crimes against the young. Judges will now have the authority to require longer supervision of sex offenders who are released from prison. And certain repeat sex offenders in our society will now face life behind bars, so they can never do harm again.

In addition, this law creates important pilot programs to help nonprofit organizations which deal with children to obtain quick and complete criminal background information on volunteers. Listen, mentoring programs are essential for our country, and we must make sure they are safe for the children they serve.

Amber Hagerman, whose mom is with us today—a good Texan, I might add—was 9 years old when she was taken away from her parents. We are acting today in her memory and in the memory of so many other girls and boys who lost their lives and innocence in acts of cruelty.

No child should ever have to experience the terror of abduction or worse. No family should ever have to endure the nightmare of losing a child. Our Nation grieves with every family that has suffered unbearable loss. And our Nation will fight threats against our children.

This law marks important progress in the protection of America's children. And now it is my honor to sign the PROTECT Act of 2003.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Marcus Brooks, brother of Tamara Brooks; and Donna Norris, mother of Amber Hagerman. S. 151, approved April 30, was assigned Public Law No. 108-21. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Signing the Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools To End the Exploitation of Children Today Act of 2003

April 30, 2003

Today I have signed into law S. 151, the "Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to end the Exploitation of Children Today Act of 2003," also known as the PROTECT Act. This important legislation gives law enforcement authorities valuable new tools to deter, detect, investigate, prosecute, and punish crimes against America's children. In particular, the Act builds upon my Administration's ongoing efforts to expand and improve the AMBER Alert pro-

gram to combat child abduction, strengthens laws against child pornography, and addresses deficiencies in Federal sentencing policies and practices.

The executive branch shall construe section 108(d)(3) of the Act, which calls for the Attorney General to submit recommendations to the Congress, in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to submit for the