

community in the Midwest, to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, to Phoenix, to inner-city Los Angeles. I'll be joined by distinguished corporate leaders and political leaders of both parties. Again, this is something that should not be a political issue at all. We want to shine a spotlight on the pockets of poverty that remain in America and on the potential they have for new investment, new jobs, new hope, new opportunity.

I will ask Congress to do its part by passing my new markets initiative. It provides for tax incentives and loan guarantees for people to invest in these areas, the same kind of incentives we give people today to invest in emerging economies abroad. I think that whatever we encourage people to do abroad, we ought to give the same encouragement to do at home, to give our people those kinds of chances.

Finally, I think we ought to do more to protect our young people from violence, to redeem the awful sacrifice of the children of Littleton, of the other school shootings, of the 13 American children we lose every single day to gun violence.

After Littleton, our whole Nation came together in grief and determination. We know there are many causes of youth violence, and therefore, there must be many solutions. Hillary and I are launching a national campaign against youth violence to bring all kinds of people from all sectors of our communities together. We have done this before, like Mothers and Students Against Drunk Driving dramatically reduced drunk driving in America, just for one example. And we can do that.

Of course, more must be done at home. Young people can have a greater influence on each other—schools, houses of worship, other places where children gather can do better. The entertainment community must do more to stop marketing violence to children. I'm proud that theater owners have agreed—[applause]—I wonder if that's coming more from the adults or the young people. [Laughter]

I feel very strongly about this. I'm proud that theater owners agreed that from now on, young people will be carded for R and PG-13 movies. I'm glad, thanks to the Vice

President and Mrs. Gore, that next year TV's will have the V-chip in half of all new TV's sold and that Internet and video game companies are helping with ratings and blocking technologies. We have our differences with various sectors of the entertainment community from time to time, but they have actually done quite a lot with the TV rating systems, the video game rating systems, the blocking technologies in the last few years, and they deserve credit for what they have done, as well as urging to do more.

But we have to face the fact that if you have more children spending more time alone—and let me say that one big difference between the time when I was your age, or even Bruce was your age, and today, in America as a whole: The average—average—young person spends 22 hours per week less with his or her parents than 30 years ago. From birth through age 18, that's over 2 years less time that the average young person spends with his or her parents—over 2 years. You don't notice it so much; it's just a few hours a day.

Why is that? More single parents, more working parents, more people living in suburbs spending more time going to and from work. Everybody is busy, busy, busy. And most of you are turning out just fine, and most of your parents are doing the best they can and doing a fine job. But we shouldn't minimize the fact that when this happens, the most vulnerable children among us will be even more vulnerable.

And that is why this whole entertainment culture counts—not because of you but because there are among us always vulnerable people. And there will be more of them, and they will be more vulnerable. And that's why the access to guns matters.

I've heard this—I got a letter the other day from a really nice person that I admire, saying, "Mr. President, we've got all these laws on the books, and if somebody wants a gun they can get it." Now, if you say that, it seems self-evident, since there's way over 220 million guns in the country. It seems self-evident. But let's look at the facts here.

Since we passed the Brady law, over the strenuous objections of the gun lobby, who then said that no criminal ever gets a gun from a gun store—just since we passed the

Brady law in 1993, we have put a stop to some 400,000 illegal gun sales, without stopping one legitimate sports man or woman from buying a gun. And you cannot convince any reasonable person in law enforcement that those 400,000 stops didn't have something to do with the fact that we have a 25-year low in the crime rate and an even bigger plummet in many areas of gun-related violent crime.

Now, in the wake of the shootings after Littleton, I asked the Senate to pass a commonsense measure to help prevent youth violence by doing more in this vein to keep guns out the hands of criminals and children. For one thing, we should close the loophole that lets a criminal turned away from a gun dealer go to a gun show or a flea market in a city and buy a gun without a background check. The technology is there now for these background checks to be done without great burden to people who run gun shows and flea markets. But today they can buy a gun there, no questions asked.

Now, the same people who said in 1993 that no criminals buy their guns at gun stores, they buy them other places, say that we should not have background checks at the other places. I think we should. I think we should require that safety locks be sold with every handgun. We should ban the importation of large-capacity ammunition clips. We should say violent juveniles should not own guns when they become adults.

It took a pivotal vote by Vice President Gore to break a tie in the Senate so that the Senate did the right thing in closing the gun show loophole. Unfortunately, as most of you probably know, 2 weeks ago, the Republicans in the House of Representatives, with some Democrats but not many, shot down America's best hope for commonsense gun control—in the face of strong public demand, clear public need, and again I say, out in the country, no partisanship.

The House filled the proposal full of high-caliber loopholes. And now they say they want to watch it die. The majority even pushed measures to weaken current law, for example, letting criminals store their guns at pawnshops, even if the reason they need to store it is because they're taking a sabbatical in prison. [Laughter] They say if they come

back to get the gun, there shouldn't be a background check. [Laughter] We've had a pawnshop background check for a good while now. They want to get rid of that, as if that is somehow terribly burdensome to people.

Well, I think we can do better than that. But I don't know how we can expect you to stand up to youth violence if the Congress won't stand up to the gun lobby. We have got to—[applause].

So again, I say, it's not too late. The House and the Senate will now appoint conferees on this bill, because they have passed two different bills. Those people can put the provisions the Senate passed into the bill, send it to the House and the Senate, pass it, and I'll sign it. It's important that we strengthen, not weaken, our laws that make it easier for criminals to get and keep guns.

Okay, so let's go back and review the bidding here. We have a raft of bipartisan bills: health care for the disabled; the minimum wage; campaign finance reform; the Patients' Bill of Rights. We have big issues on which there are disagreements but where honorable compromise is possible: long-term reform of Social Security and Medicare; paying down the debt. We have a clear case where Republicans and Democrats should join together to mobilize private capital to give new life to our poorest communities: legislation to hire more teachers and to raise educational standards; sensible but vital steps to protect our children from violence.

These are big things. These are things worthy of a great nation and its elected representatives. I will work day and night to achieve this agenda. I hope you will support it, again, without regard to party. And I hope you will believe that good citizenship and public service are worth your time and effort.

Many times when I have come here, and many times around the country, I have referred to a professor I had here, who I talked about in 1991, who taught Western Civilization. He said, our civilization was unique in the belief of what he called "future preference." That is, the idea that the future can be better than the past, and that every individual has a duty to make it so.

Now, you obviously believe that or you wouldn't be here. I'm about to give you all your medal, and we're going to take pictures.