

According to a recent study by the Bureau of Justice statistics, an incredible 94 percent of State prisoners are violent criminals or repeat offenders.

I introduced legislation this year that is on its way to the President. It will permit the States to take back control of their prison systems away from Federal judges who are out of touch with the everyday concerns of working, law-abiding families. In my own State, one Federal judge has taken it upon himself to say that prison cells in the State prisons are too small and there is not enough recreation space. What is his remedy? His remedy is to release prisoners early. As a result, in Texas, violent criminals serve 6 months of every year of their sentences.

Mr. President, what we need is judges who understand it is not cruel and unusual punishment for a criminal who has a victim to endure a hot, uncomfortable jail cell without color TV, without his or her favorite foods, without indoor and outdoor recreational facilities.

Mr. President, Americans are ready for a prison system that does not more for prisoners, but less for prisoners and more for law-abiding citizens. No prisoner should be eligible for early release or parole who is not drug free, able to read, and trained in a skill that will enable that person to get a job outside. If you cannot function in society outside, you should remain inside the prison if you have not served your time.

We should say very clearly to those who commit crimes and end up behind bars, we want you to learn to cooperate with society. We want to give you a chance. You are locked up because you did not cooperate with society and you have a victim.

The Speaker of the House said, "We ought to require prisoners to work 48 hours a week and study 12 hours a week. If we kept them busy 60 hours a week doing something positive, I think they would be different people when they go out into the world. Recidivism would fall and victims would be spared."

Mr. President, what is the first and foremost responsibility of Government? The first and foremost responsibility is to provide law-abiding citizens the conditions to live freely. But for too long, the Federal Government and Federal judges have interfered with the responsibility of States to meet their first responsibility to their citizens. Texans and Americans all over this country have had enough. They are tired of politicians and judges that blame society for crime. They blame criminals for crime. They would like for Government to do the same thing.

There were 10 million violent crimes in America in 1993. Those were the ones that were reported. Mr. President, 100,000 criminals were sent to prison to serve time for violent crimes. What has happened to a criminal justice system that imprisons 1 person in 100 for every violent crime committed in this country?

Mr. President, we can put barricades in front of the White House, but too many Americans do not have that luxury. Ordinary citizens are faced each day with the threat of violent crime. They have had enough. They want their streets back. They want their communities back.

Mr. President, I want to end with a recollection that I had 1 year ago today. It was from a victim of the Oklahoma tragedy. I will never forget watching television, as so many of us in this country did, and I saw this man, bandaged, his eyes swollen shut, you could not see anything else on his face, and a news reporter put a camera and a microphone in front of this victim. He was a man who had gotten up and gone to work that day. His life had blown up in front of him in just a few short minutes. The reporter said, "How do you feel?" This man, through his bandages and his swollen eyes, said, "I feel like I live in the greatest country on Earth, and I'm going to have to work harder to make it better."

Mr. President, that victim's spirit will do more to return this country to its bearing than any laws that Congress could pass.

Our Nation's leaders must strive to do what is legally possible to give our citizens a society in which they can go to work and raise their families freely.

But, Mr. President, even more important, our leaders should never forget the victims' spirit from Oklahoma City and all the people who came to help after that tragedy in the great spirit of this country. We must remember that spirit is what will rebuild this country, that is the spirit on which this country's future is based.

We will provide the laws. We have done that. We have done that this week and we must do more. But we must also come back to our bearings. What made this country great was people who love this country no matter what victimization they have had. They are going to work harder to make it better.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I appreciate the remarks of the Senator from Texas. As always, she is an eloquent voice on this subject, and I am most pleased that she could be here this morning.

Mr. President, I yield up to 10 minutes to the Senator from Ohio.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio is recognized for up to 10 minutes.

GUNS AND CRIMINALS

Mr. DEWINE. I thank my friend and colleague from Georgia for putting this time together this morning.

Mr. President, I want to talk this morning about the question of guns and criminals who use guns. We have debates—and often they are very contentious debates—about a lot of issues concerning crime. We talk on this floor about contentious issues, such as the

Brady bill and assault weapons. And these are important issues. They are important. I happen to favor these bills. But I think we need to recognize what really is important, and we need to step back a little bit and talk about what really makes a difference when we talk about what we do to deal with the crime problem.

These two issues—the Brady bill and assault weapons—are highly contentious. Second, frankly, they, at best, only have a marginal impact on the problem. Third, they tend to attract somewhat overblown rhetoric, frankly, on both sides of the issue. I think both sides of the Brady bill debate and both sides of the assault weapon debate overemphasize what the importance of this debate is.

I am, frankly, puzzled that we cannot seem to move forward on more effective proposals that everyone ought to favor—proposals that will really make a difference. These proposals that I am talking about may not be very exciting, but they are real, they work, they make a difference, they make a difference out on the street.

Mr. President, we all agree that we, as a society, ought to do more to protect our citizens from armed career criminals. There are predators out there—predators, Mr. President—who are repeat violent criminals who use a gun while committing a crime. We, as a society, have to make a strong, effective response to this threat.

Mr. President, in this area, as in all areas of national concern, we really need to be asking the following questions: One, what works? What really makes a difference? Two, what level of Government should do this particular job?

In the area of gun crimes, we have a pretty good answer. We have an answer that is based on experience and based on history. Now, we all know that there is some controversy over whether general restrictions on gun ownership would help to reduce crime. But there is no controversy over whether taking guns away from felons would reduce crime. Democrat, Republican, liberal, conservative—I think everyone gets that, everyone understands it, and there should not be any controversy about it. If you take guns out of the hands of felons, you are going to reduce crime.

When it comes to felons, Mr. President, unilateral disarmament of the thugs is simply the best policy. Let us disarm the people who hurt people. Although we can quibble about statistics, the facts are that the vast majority of crimes in this country today, the vast majority of violent crimes, the vast majority of crimes that hurt people are committed by a small number of the criminals. One estimate is that 70 percent of all violent crime in this country is committed by less than 6 percent of the criminals, which is a relatively small number of people.

And so what I say that we need to do, Mr. President, is to target the violent career criminals, particularly those who use a gun to commit a felony—target them, convict them, get them off the street, lock them up, and keep them locked up.

Mr. President, we have actually tried this, and we know it works. One of the most successful crime fighting initiatives of recent years was known as Project Triggerlock. This project was wildly successful precisely because it addressed a problem squarely head on, and it placed the resources where they were most needed.

Let me talk for a moment and share with you the story about Project Triggerlock. The U.S. Justice Department began Project Triggerlock in May 1991. The program targeted for prosecution in Federal court armed, violent, repeat offenders. Under Project Triggerlock, U.S. attorneys throughout the country turned to their local, State prosecutors and said this: "If you catch a felon, and you catch that felon with a gun, and if you want us to, the U.S. attorneys, we, the Federal prosecutors, will take over the prosecution for you. We will prosecute this individual under Federal law—Federal law that many, many times, in regard to violent repeat offenders who use a gun in the commission of a felony, is tougher than State law. We will prosecute this individual. We will convict this individual, and we will hit this person with a stiff Federal mandatory sentence. And then we will lock him up in a Federal prison at no cost to the State or local community. Basically, we will deep-six this guy, get him out of society. We will take the cost of prosecution and then we will pay to house him for 10, 15, 20 years while he is out of society."

That is the type of assistance to local communities that makes a difference. That is what Project Triggerlock did. Triggerlock was an assault on the very worst criminals in America. Mr. President, it worked.

Listen to these figures. This program took 15,000—15,000—criminals off the streets in an 18-month period of time. Triggerlock caused a dramatic increase in Federal firearms prosecutions. In the first 12 months of Triggerlock, the program initiated firearms prosecutions against 6,454 defendants. It worked.

Now, incredibly, Mr. President—incredibly—the Clinton Justice Department has chosen to deemphasize Project Triggerlock. They tell us they still have it; they just do not talk about it. Apparently, they do not even keep the statistics on it. They do not make it a priority.

Mr. President, Project Triggerlock was the most effective Federal program in recent history for targeting and removing armed career criminals. But the Clinton administration Justice Department, today, acts like Triggerlock simply does not exist. While the Clinton Justice Department

says that Triggerlock remains important, the facts, the statistics do not bear this out. They, apparently, no longer keep records on these prosecutions—and, I guess, for very good reason.

If you look at the records kept in Federal courts—go to the Federal courts to get your statistics, here is what you learn: Since the advent of the Clinton administration we have seen a substantial decrease in the prosecution for weapons and firearms offenses.

That is a shocking fact.

We also see a substantial decrease in actual convictions for these firearm related offenses in Federal court.

Let us look at the numbers. In 1992, there were 4,501 prosecutions of gun criminal charges for these crimes. In 1993, the number of prosecutions dropped slightly to 4,348. But in 1994, the number plunged all the way down to 3,695. We should have been seeing an increase. Instead, we started going the wrong way. That is a 19-percent drop in weapons and firearms prosecutions in the Federal courts during the Clinton administration—a 19-percent drop.

Mr. President, who in this country can believe that this is justified? Who in this country believes that the threat of gun criminals to the society is less than it was 2 years ago? Clearly, it is not.

Mr. President, the number of total convictions for firearm-related prosecutions in Federal court has dropped as well. Again, let me go back to 1992. In 1992, 3,837 of these defendants were convicted. In 1993, there was a drop, a drop to 3,814. But in 1994, we see a more severe drop—down to 3,345. Again, instead of going up in prosecutions, which is what you would have expected, we see the trend lines going down. Mr. President, that is going in exactly the wrong direction.

Last year, I introduced a crime bill that would have restored Project Triggerlock. It would have required a U.S. attorney in every jurisdiction in this country to make a monthly report to the Attorney General in Washington on the number of arrests, the prosecutions and convictions that they had achieved in the previous month on gun-related defenses. The Attorney General under my bill should then report semi-annually to the Congress on the work of these prosecutors. Then we would know the information would be available.

It is like anything else. When you start counting, when you start publicizing the results, you start holding people accountable, and people then respond.

Let me say that there are a lot of U.S. prosecutors who are doing a good job in this area who on their own are emphasizing the prosecution of people with guns. But it should not just be left up to every U.S. attorney in the country to decide one way or the other. This should be a national policy. It should be a national policy that is driven by the Attorney General and driven

by the President of the United States. Quite frankly, nothing short of that, in my opinion, is acceptable.

The truth is that, like all prosecutors, U.S. attorneys have limited resources. So like all prosecutors, U.S. attorneys have to exercise discretion about whom to prosecute. We know that. We all recognize that Congress can and should not dictate to prosecutors whom they should prosecute. But it is clear that we as a Congress, that we as a Senate, should go on record with the following proposition. There is nothing more important in fighting crime than getting armed career criminals off the streets.

Mr. President, I think the Project Triggerlock is a very important way to keep the focus on the prosecution of gun crimes. Getting gun criminals off the streets is a major national priority. I believe that we should behave accordingly.

This is no time to turn our backs on a proven, promising mainstream anticrime initiative; an anticrime initiative that is not controversial, an anticrime initiative that would not tie up 5 minutes of debate on the Senate floor in regard to whether or not we should do it. Everyone understands that we need to do this. What we need is the will from the executive branch to really reinstitute Project Triggerlock and make it work.

Mr. President, families who are living in crime-threatened communities need to know that we are going to do what it takes to get guns off their streets. We are going to go after the armed career criminals. We are going to prosecute them, we are going to convict them, we are going to lock them up, and we are going to keep them locked up.

Mr. President, in conclusion, this is why we have a Government in the first place—to protect the innocent, to keep ordinary citizens safe from violent predatory criminals.

I think Government needs to do a much better job at this very fundamental task, and it is inherently the fundamental task of the Government. That is why targeting the armed career criminal is such a major component of our national policy.

The Clinton administration, I believe, should reverse its opposition to Project Triggerlock, and should do so immediately.

I thank my colleague from Georgia for the time. I thank the Chair.

I yield the floor.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I appreciate the remarks of the Senator from Ohio.

I now yield up to 5 minutes to the senior Senator from Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

PRISON CONSTRUCTION AND CRIME IN TEXAS

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, I want to thank our colleague from Georgia