

8/9/95  
Safe & Drug Free  
Schools

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REMARKS BY FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON  
AT SAFE AND DRUG FREE SCHOOLS EVENT  
AUGUST 9, 1995

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome all of you to the White House this afternoon. I am delighted that we were able to hold this event and to highlight the work that is being done in Delaware, and Maryland and Virginia and really what it represents throughout the country. I am so pleased that Dr. Lee Brown who is the Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy has been able to work with many of you in this room and to bring all of you together for this occasion.

I want to start by saying that this is an exciting time to be a young person in America. It is also a very challenging time. And I believe that too often, adults in America do not celebrate the accomplishments and the success and the goodness of our kids. And so for me this afternoon, this is really a chance to say that I am proud that the vast majority of our children and teenagers do not join gangs, do not use drugs, are not committing violent acts, and I think it's about time that more adults said, "We are proud of the children and the teenagers in America." And I would like every adult to say that to a child or a teenager in the next week.

Now we know that many of the young people in this room and certainly many millions more around the country face the challenge and the threat of drug use. And I know that there are lots of pressures on young people to use drugs. That is why the President and Dr. Brown and the people working with them worked so hard to pass a piece of legislation in the Congress called, "The Safe and Drug Free Schools Program." That is part of the President's entire strategy to try to fight drugs and to try to help kids who want to do the right thing, resist the pressures that they feel.

The Drug Free Schools program already reaches students in over 90% of our schools. By giving communities across America the funding and the tools to combat our nation's drug problem at its root. This program, that really tries to make our schools havens of safety for our children, can accommodate all different kinds of community needs. As many of the people in this room know, the Recreation, Education and Prevention program, called, "REAP", that is represented here, encourages students to help each other, to serve as mentors, or coaches, or friends for other students. In addition, another program that I know quite a bit

about because my daughter was part of it when she was in grammar school, the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program, known as "DARE", brings specially trained police officers into the schools to serve as role models and teach young people how to acquire the skills they need to resist drug use.

You know, it sounds so simple to just say to people, "just say no", and then end the conversation. But I know -- as hard as it is sometimes to remember -- that when you're a teenager, that is not always the easiest thing to do. When friends, and older kids are putting pressure on you. So programs like "REAP" and "DARE" give kids the tools they need to be able to not only say "no," but really mean it. And to be able to walk away, and to do something positive instead. These programs also provide adults the chance to support the millions of young people who are not giving into peer pressure and who are not involved with drugs. And I think those adults, whether they're in the programs that we're going to see and hear about today, or whether they're on the sidelines cheering on, and doing everything they can in their own homes, deserve our thanks.

You know, obviously much of what has to be done in the fight against drug use starts in the home. And it starts with parents and older brothers and sisters, and other relatives, equipping children with the self-confidence and the self-worth to be able to say, "no". But every family needs help in that effort. It is sometimes not so easy to do all by yourself. And that is why the kind of response that the President has put into place is aimed at giving adults, giving parents, giving teachers, giving police officers ways of helping our kids.

But despite the importance of this fight against illegal drug use, there are some in Congress who tried to slash the funding for the Safe and Drug Free Schools program, first in the 1995 budget and who now want to cut 23 million students from the program in 1996. You know, with drug use among Americans and particularly among American children, the serious problem it is today, cutting our only federally-funded drug prevention program would be very foolish. I mean, from the founding of our country with people like Benjamin Franklin, we know that the ounce of prevention is worth more than the pound of cure. And by helping communities and families prevent drug use, we're not only saving lives we are saving dollars. So many of you in this room know first hand, fighting drugs is not something abstract, it's not something that shows up as an occasional PSA on your television set, it is something that you live with and work on everyday.

The Drug Free Schools program makes a lot of sense. For example, it also fights tobacco use as well as other substance abuse. This is, as the President has said -- and is saying right about now in North Carolina -- very, very important. Why? Well first because tobacco smoking is harmful in and of itself. If

you've ever visited someone in the hospital who has smoked for a long time and seen them hooked up to a machine that is breathing for them, if you've ever sat with them after they've had the operation to remove the cancerous lung, you know that smoking is harmful and it doesn't matter how much money the tobacco lobby spends to try to tell you that it's not, it is. It significantly increases the risk of cancer, heart disease, and respiratory ailments.

A national study recently released by the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University demonstrates another reason why tobacco smoking is so dangerous. Not only does it hurt your body -- and that is enough of a reason to stop -- there's also a very strong relationship between young people who start smoking cigarettes and those who go on to use illegal drugs. For example, the study found that 90% of the children and adults who used marijuana smoked cigarettes or drank alcohol first, and that adults who smoked as children were three times more likely to use cocaine regularly than are adults who never smoked as children. So tobacco products should be kept away from children because they harm people, they make people sick, they kill people, they cost us millions and hundreds of millions of dollars. But they also are a "gateway" experience to using illegal drugs.

Now, even though we should support the programs that Dr. Brown and the President have championed, and we should fight against the efforts in the Congress to try to cut those programs back when we need them so much, there really isn't anything that can take the place of parents sitting down with children and telling them the difference between right and wrong, the harm and danger that flows from tobacco and drug use. This is something though that should not wait until our children are teenagers, the lessons that lead a youngster to be able to say "no," start as soon as that baby comes home from the hospital. They start with a relationship between mothers and fathers who care for their babies, spend time with their babies, help their toddlers learn how to be disciplined, are involved in reading stories and talking with their children, become participants in their children's schooling. So that the entire conversation in a sense, starts from the beginning and never ends. As we attempt to show our children how making good decisions is something that helps them and also helps those around them.

So I hope that as we hear in a few minutes first hand from participants in REAP and DARE about how they are helping each other and helping their communities to become safer places to learn and grow. We will also think about how the laws that are passed, the people, who implement those laws, needs partners. And those partners are in the homes of every single American child. So it is a great pleasure for me now to introduce someone who has devoted his entire adult life in trying to fight against

evil and wrong doing as a police officer and a police commissioner. Who has to understand what works. And was one of the real pioneers in community policing. And who is now leading the fight on behalf of the President against drug use in this country. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Lee Brown.

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