

Gun Control Briefing  
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**Gun Control Briefing**  
**Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton,**  
**the President and others**

**The White House**  
**April 27, 1999**

MRS. CLINTON: (Applause.) Thank you all. Thank you. Please be seated. And good afternoon. It's an honor to join the president in welcoming all of you to the White House this afternoon. We are especially honored to be joined by a very large number of senators and representatives from both parties who are here on the stage for this event; also Secretary Rubin and Attorney General Reno, Secretary Riley, Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder, Undersecretary of the Treasury Jim Johnson. And you will hear in just a few minutes from Senator Feinstein, Senator Chafee, Representative Conyers, Representative McCarthy. Also in the audience is Mayor Paul Helmke from Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Bob Walker, president of Handgun Control, Inc.

We have come together in the wake of a terrible tragedy that has put our entire nation in mourning and that was reminded all of us once again that everything in life pales in comparison to our ability to keep our children safe and out of harm's way. Today our thoughts and prayers remain with the families and friends and the citizens of Littleton as they bid emotional farewells to their beloved children and a dedicated teacher. Yet, even in the midst of this terrible tragedy, we also see the people of Littleton pulling together to pray and comfort and sustain each other, and many of the rest of us are gathering strength and hope from their example.

There are many people here today, out in the audience and on this stage, who have worked tirelessly to create the safe schools and communities that we all want for our children. I particularly want to thank Attorney General Reno and Secretary of Education Dick Riley and Secretary Bob Rubin because they have worked together tirelessly to try to create better conditions to provide for the safety of our children.

I also want to thank all the members of Congress who are here, who have proved that ending the violence and limiting access to firearms can be and should be a bipartisan goal.

There are many others in this room who are on the front lines in creating safer communities—religious groups, advocates for gun control, victims' groups, child advocates, law enforcement, community, and parent organizations—and we thank you all for coming. You represent literally thousands, if not millions, of your fellow Americans.

All of us here are searching for answers to what happened in Littleton. I don't know that anyone will ever be able to explain fully the events of a week ago. Nor, I doubt, can we create a perfect set of solutions that, if followed, would have prevented what happened at Columbine High School or would stop forever acts of violence that occur in our communities around our country. But that does not mean that we are either hopeless or helpless in the face of this tragedy. Instead, we have to work together to come up with the best possible solutions that we can craft, that we believe will make a difference for

our children. We come here to say simply that there are some tough things we must be willing to say and some tough steps we must be willing to take if we are to stop the violence.

Now I hope that everyone does know that the vast majority of America's schools are safe. But we also know that these schools in our country are not islands cut off from the rest of society. No school security system or metal detector can keep out the culture of violence that dominates the lives of so many of our children.

When our culture romanticizes and glorifies violence on TV, in the movies, on the Internet, in songs, and when there are video games that you win based on how many people you kill, then I think the evidence is absolutely clear; our children become desensitized to violence and lose their empathy for fellow human beings. Studies show what many of us have believed; that such exposures causes more aggression and antisocial behavior. So today we must fully acknowledge, once and for all, that America's culture of violence is having a profound effect on our children, and we must resolve to do what we can to change that culture. It will take strong leadership. I remember well when the president convened the 1996 White House Conference on Children's Television, where television industry leaders joined him in agreeing to air more educational children's shows and also to work with the administration to establish a rating system to help parents navigate what's appropriate and what's not for their kids.

And soon we will have the V-chip available for every home in our country. But it will take more than strong leadership from the media and entertainment world to stop the culture of violence that surrounds our children. Kids need more caring, responsible adults in their lives, yet when single parenthood and two working parents are on the rise, too many of America's children are growing up alone. Parents are the central figures in their children's lives, but parents need help. They need help from the larger community, and that means all of us—teachers, police, counselors, community and religious leaders, elected officials. All of us have to help parents find the help they need, and we have to work together to keep our children and our communities safe. We also know that we have to do everything possible to ensure that young people do not have easy access to weapons. We now know that includes not only firearms but bomb-making materiel.

Now any one of us who hasn't become completely amnesiac about our own growing-up years know that children will have disagreements and arguments. They sometimes will even have fights among themselves. Part of growing up is learning how to control one's impulses, which is often difficult for young people. But there is a very big difference between a schoolyard fight that many of us can remember and what happens today, with the access to the arsenal of guns, rifles, and bombs that the two young men in Littleton were able to bring into their school.

It is criminal how easy it is for children in America to obtain guns. Just last year 6,000 students were expelled for bringing guns to school, and Littleton is the latest tragic example of how the availability of those guns can turn a sense of alienation, of rage, of not belonging, of not fitting in into a deadly encounter. Every day in America we lose 13 precious children to gun-related violence. Every two days, therefore, we lose the equivalent of a classroom of students.

“Guns” and “children” are two words that should never be put together in the same sentence, and this president and this administration have been working hard and successfully to try to keep them apart. I think we all in America should take pride in the passage of the Brady bill, which has denied handguns to 250,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers. And since the crime bill was enacted, 19 of the deadliest assault weapons are harder to find on our streets. We will never know how many tragedies we’ve avoided because of these efforts, but we do know how much more remains to be done.

Today we will hear about further steps that we hope all of us are willing to take to make our schools and communities places in which all citizens can live in safety, free from violence and fear.

In a few minutes, the people of Littleton, Denver and, indeed, all of Colorado will be stopping whatever they do for a moment of silence on behalf of those who lost their lives. I think it would be appropriate here in the White House that we join them, and that we not only use that moment of silence to remember the victims of this tragedy and the perpetrators, but that we think about all of the other children in America who tell us, often, that they’re scared, they’re scared to go outside, they’re scared because they know people who bring guns to school, they’re scared because of what they see happening around them. Our first obligation is to try to make our children free from that kind of fear. So if we could just take a moment, in solidarity with the people not only in Colorado who have suffered this loss but people throughout our country on behalf of our children.

(Moment of silence.)

Thank you.

It is now my great honor to introduce someone who has shown remarkable courage in standing up to the gun lobby, who has really put her strongest convictions on the line and become an outspoken advocate of gun control, who knows firsthand the terrible consequences of handgun violence. Please join me in welcoming Senator Diane Feinstein.

SEN. DIANNE FEINSTEIN (D-CA): (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you very much.

Let me thank the first lady, I think, for her very stirring words. And during that moment of silence, ladies and gentlemen, I thought that America really is at a very pivotal time in our history. If we don’t stand up now and say, “Enough is enough,” when will we stand up?

I think at this time we’re all looking for answers, and I suspect that no one answer is going to be found to be all abiding. I think we’re going to find, as the first lady just suggested, that it is a combination of a number of different factors. The difficulty parents have today in America. The difficulty in having any precise parameters to what is right and what is wrong. To have evolved into a culture of kind of instant gratification. And where we see the promulgation of a culture of violence surrounding us. And when the society is literally awash with guns.

Sure, there are some regulations. But are they adequate? Hardly. To get anything through this Congress is extraordinarily difficult. And I want to just thank the president and the first lady for stepping forward at this time and presenting to the Congress a package of very precise and very targeted statutes which could make a substantial change.

As for me, I have watched this issue for a long time. I have watched us lose leaders. I have watched us lose family members. And from the day that a man by the name of Patrick Purdy walked into a Stockton school yard some 20 years ago, I have seen the permeation of violence and guns down to a five-year old in Memphis, Tennessee, who last May took a gun to school to kill his teacher because that teacher had given him a timeout the day before. A five-year old, even before the so-called "age of reason," picking a gun off his grandfather's dresser and taking it to school to shoot his teacher. The way they found it is because they found some of the bullets and traced it to the weapon. And the arrest statement says he wanted to shoot his teacher, and other kindergartners as well. That to me is the depths of societal woe, and we must begin to think very seriously about it.

For me, since I have been in the Senate, I have tried to concentrate on two issues, one of them being assault weapons and the other being bomb making, since of group of sheriffs in California met with me and said, "You know, it's possible to unload a handbook from the Internet and learn how to steal the equipment, break into the labs and build some of the most explosive bombs." Nothing therein has any legal application, all illegal application. For three years, we've gotten it passed in the Senate, to have it deleted in conference. And I hope that this year—we've worked on it with the Justice Department—that there will be a bomb-making amendment that will pass this that will provide an opportunity that when there is knowledge that this can be used in a criminal way, that it be illegal to post it on the Internet. (Applause.)

In 1994, with the president's support and the Justice Department's support, the Senate passed an amendment which would prohibit the manufacture of 19 specific types of assault weapons. The thrust of that legislation was to dry up the supply of these weapons of war over time, weapons of war because these weapons, unlike a pistol, you don't have to aim precisely, you can hold at the hip. They have light triggers. You can spray-fire. And they have big enough clips so that you can kill large numbers of people before anyone can get to you to disarm you.

These are the weapons that are the weapons of choice for the grievance killers, for the drive-by shooters, what the gangs use and what the drug cartels use. They were all made for military purposes, not for civilian purposes. The fail-safe of that legislation was to prohibit the manufacture, the sale and the possession of clips, drums or strips of more than 10 bullets. That's in the legislation. And subsequent to passage of the legislation, it is illegal to manufacture these anywhere in the United States.

Aha, but there's a loophole, and that loophole is that it allows for the foreign import of clips, drums, or strips of more than 10 bullets made in some 20 different countries. Consequently, since 1984, these clips have been rolling into the United States. In the last six months alone, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms is approving permits for 8.6 million of these, some of them as big as 250,000.

Well, about a year and a half ago, we explored whether the president could use his executive authority to ban the importation, and the Justice said no, it will take legislation.

So I've introduced legislation, which came to a vote in the Senate last year, got 44 votes. We will reintroduce it, hopefully sooner rather than later, because the thrust of this, again, is to dry up the supply of these big clips over time and make them less available to people. Mr. President, I want you to know that I fully support the measures you've submitted to the Congress. I am hopeful that we will be able to take immediate action. I think the people of this nation deserve no less, want no less. And it is my very strong feeling that a dominant majority of the people of this nation will support your targeted measures, and I certainly know that's true for California. So thank you both very, very much. (Applause.) And now, if I may, it's my great pleasure to introduce someone from the other side of the aisle that I deeply respect. Senator John Chafee has approached his career in Washington with one overarching goal: to operate through consensus and cooperation, wherever and whenever possible, in order to get things done. And this is the case when it comes to enacting reasonable and common-sense measures to limit gun violence. He was an early proponent of the Brady law, which imposes a waiting period of three days for handgun purchases, and he sponsored laws also to ban a range of assault weapons. He is now an original co-sponsor of a bill to make permanent the Brady waiting period. He is also an original co-sponsor, with Senator Boxer, of the Firearms Rights, Responsibilities, and Remedies Act.

This bill would provide that any person or entity harmed by gun violence, including city and county governments, has the right to sue gun manufacturers, dealers, and importers. He's also a sponsor of the Durbin-Chafee Children's Access to Firearms Prevention Act. This bill encourages adults to take steps to ensure gun safety in homes with children. It will provide penalties for parents who leave guns around the house without safety locks. He's a man—I think, a giant—in the Senate; a very fine United States senator, and I am just delighted he's here today. Would you warmly welcome Senator John Chafee from the great State of Rhode Island. (Applause.)

SEN. JOHN CHAFEE (R-RI): Thank you. Thank you. Well, thank you very much, Dianne, for that very, very kind introduction. And I think we all owe a big round of applause to Dianne for the work she's done in connection with these. (Applause.)

Mr. President and Mrs. Clinton, I want to first thank you for all the leadership you've given in this effort. And it's going to take—we've got to be buckled down for the long haul here. It's not going to be easy, but with your leadership, I'm confident that we can achieve the results that we all seek. I appreciate your asking me to be here with you today to talk about the shocking and deplorable problem of gun violence in our nation's schools. Reporters and commentators alike refer to "school violence." I can't help thinking to myself, this isn't about schools. It's about guns. This is about the insanely easy access Americans, including American children, have to guns. This is about the distorted interpretation of the Constitution that convinces otherwise rational citizens that it's their inalienable right to be armed to the teeth. It's the strangest way they've got that figured out. (Laughter.) Too many of us shake our heads and say there's nothing we can do. Too many of us are quick to blame society or the media or Hollywood or the Internet, but too few of us are willing to do what needs to be done to ensure that guns stay out of

the hands of children. Now is the time for passage of the Child Firearms Access Prevention Act, which Dianne touched on, which would hold adult gun owners liable if their weapons are used by a child to harm himself or someone else. (Applause.) Now is the time for passage of the Child Safety Lock Act, which would require a safety lock to be sold with each new firearm. Now is the time for a permanent waiting period before the purchase of a handgun and of legislation that forbids unlicensed sellers to peddle their wares at gun shows without conducting any background checks. (Applause.)

Let us not blame everywhere, but where it most belongs, with the gun industry and with the government that protects it. When we look at gun violence in other industrialized nations, listen to these statistics. They're shocking. Our culpability is clear. According to the Center for Disease Control, U.S. children are 12 times more likely to die from firearm injuries than our children in the 26 other industrial nations combined. In all those other nations combined, the child has one-twelfth of the chance of dying from firearms injury compared to a child in the U.S.

To those who say there's something terribly wrong with an American culture, a culture that breeds the sort of children who are capable of wreaking such carnage, I say it isn't our American culture that's wrong, what's wrong is our love affair with guns. (Applause.)

Now it's my honor to introduce John Conyers, the ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee. Among his many distinctions, which include being a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus, Mr. Conyers is the second most senior member of the House of Representatives. He is now serving his 18<sup>th</sup> term. John Conyers.

REP. JOHN CONYERS (D-MI): (Applause.) Thank you very much. I want to thank the president and the first lady for their courage and leadership in the wake of the Littleton tragedy. On all fronts, the president and the first lady and all of us here today, in the administration, and especially the Congress, continue to show us what leadership really means when the going gets difficult.

Now, the tragedy in Colorado was one of unprecedented proportion, but the sad truth is that each and every day, in every city and state, we experience firearm tragedies that snuff out lives that are just beginning. Each day in America, there are nearly two dozen firearm homicides. That amounts to a couple hundred a week. That's nearly 10,000 a year. And it doesn't include the 18,000 gun suicides that we experience each year.

That comes to a total of 35,000 gun deaths in the United States annually. Ladies and gentlemen, it's got to stop. We can do better, and that's why we're called to this place today. Those numbers compare to two handgun murders in New Zealand a year, 15 in Japan, 30 in all of Britain—all countries that have meaningful gun control.

Now the best guess is that there are over 250 million guns in America, nearly one for every citizen of this country. Our streets are swimming with these weapons of death and destruction. Handgun murders are the leading cause for the death of African American men ages 15 to 34. And overwhelmingly all the data shows that in non-recreational settings, firearms are almost always used aggressively, not defensively.

The major political impediment to passing meaningful measures to keep guns out of the hands of the criminals is the National Rifle Association, who, in my judgment, has a choke hold on so many of the members of the Congress—the NRA, who makes a killing selling guns.

Tomorrow in the House we plan to mark up the juvenile justice bill, and in the Judiciary Committee we will use all of the procedural rules at—that I have to try to get a vote on some of the issues that have been discussed here today. Let's start tomorrow trying to pass the measure that President Clinton has put forward. (Applause.)

The families of Littleton want to hear from us. The families of tens of thousands of murder victims in America want to hear from us. And it's an outrage, and I call upon the chairman of the Judiciary Committee and the speaker of the House to schedule this proposal for action on the House floor before the Memorial Day recess. We want action now. (Applause.)

Yes, we can mourn and honor the victims of Littleton with words, or we can mourn and honor those victims with action. I know which one of the two choices that I will make, and everyone here, and I think that if we don't move now, we're losing a tremendous movement, a feeling in this country that I don't think I've ever noticed before that now is the time for the feelings of most Americans to be actualized in federal legislation.

And now, my friends, I want to introduce a member who has distinguished herself, from New York, Carolyn McCarthy. We consider her to be the conscience of the Congress on guns, and we present her to you at this time. (Applause.)

REP. CAROLYN MCCARTHY (D-NY): Mrs. Clinton, President Clinton, thank you for bringing us all here together today.

Last Tuesday, I was sitting in the Educational Committee and someone from my staff came up to me and just tapped me on the shoulder, and said, "Congresswoman, another school shooting." You have to understand, when you are a victim, the feelings that go through you. I thought of when my brother told me that my husband was killed on the Long Island Railroad, and told me that my son was fighting for his life. I thought of Suzanne Wilson, who lost her daughter last year in Jonesboro. I thought of all the other school shootings that we've seen in the last year and a half. I thought of all the committee hearings that we've had in the last year on how to deal with this issue.

And then I thought of all the victims in the last number of years that have lost someone. And here we are, talking about what can we do. I have to tell you it's extremely frustrating, because we are faced with silence all the time. We're hearing from the other side already: "There is nothing we can do." I'm sorry, you have heard of so many proposals; there IS something we can do. There has to be something that we can do. (Applause.) All of us here, every single one of us here—and, believe me, a lot more—are willing to fight for the American people. We're willing to fight for our children.

But you know what's going to happen? We'll go to committee, and there will be silence as the shootings go on. When we go to the speaker of the House and beg for a debate on the floor, there will be silence, and the shootings will go on. We will fight for you, but I

have to tell you, the American public's voice has to be heard. We have to hear from you. (Applause.) "It's not going to work." Is that what you want to keep hearing? "It's not going to work. You can't do it." Please.

We're burying our children in Colorado, and tomorrow we'll be burying 13 more, and the day after that we will be burying 13 more—every single day. Do we have to have a larger mass of killings for America to say, "Enough is enough"? Please don't let that happen.

Please, I'm asking everyone out there, call your representative. Let's hear from you. Give us the strength to keep fighting. Give us the power to win, because I have to tell you something I've learned in the very short time since I've been here in Congress: When enough people outside of Washington start calling into Washington, wow, people start listening. "Gee, maybe we should look at this." Think about HMOs. Why are we even talking about it in Congress? Because the American people are demanding it.

I'm a nurse. Let's talk about what it's costing our health care. Because we've seen homicides go down—and that's wonderful—can we talk about the billions of dollars it's costing us because more of our young people are surviving? I know Secretary Riley would like that money for his education. I know the president would like that money for health care. We can do this, people. We can do this, but you got to help us. I don't want to hear at the next violent shooting, "We can't do anything." I've heard it too many times in the last two years. We have to have your voices. Don't say that Congress can't do anything. You can make Congress do something. President Clinton was there for my family when my husband was killed, and he tried to make this a safer nation, and he has. And I want to thank him for calling me or taking my call the night of last Tuesday, because I have to be honest with you; I didn't want to hear about another shooting. And I said to the president, "We have to do something." When he responded, the pain that was in his voice was so real, because he does feel the pain of the families and the children that have died, and he has seen too much. And I want to thank him for his dedication.

This is not an issue that politicians really like to push, believe me.

But the president has been on the forefront, and I want to thank him for helping me to initiate all the bills that are here and all the initiatives that we're going to take. And I'm certainly going to be fighting for the Children's Safety Protection Bill, because that's my job. No, all of us. The large-capacity clips, some say that wouldn't work. Well, tell that to the three young people that died on the Long Island Railroad if there was only 10 clips -- 10 bullets in a clip instead of the larger clips. Child safety locks. Tell that to Catherine Murphy, who lost her daughter, son, because somebody didn't lock their gun.

Mr. President, it's my pleasure to introduce you. And thank you again for your leadership.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much, Carolyn, John Conyers, Senator Chafee, Senator Feinstein, all the many members of Congress who are here. I thank the attorney general, the secretary of the Treasury and the secretary of Education. I'm glad to see my old friend Mayor Helmke and Bob Walker and others here. We have, I think, over 40 members of Congress here and two senators

who went back to the floor to fight for this issue to be put on the floor today. I would like to do two things. First, I want to tell you specifically what we are proposing, and I'll do that. But secondly, I would like to tie what we are proposing to all these culture arguments, and talk about, if you will, at least two cultures that exist in America, and say that I think this in the end is going to come down to what our conception of America as a community is and what our responsibilities to one another are.

I want to begin by saying that a lot of people have made remarkable contributions, I think, to this effort to get us to look at the violence of our culture and how it makes the most vulnerable of our children, without regard to their income or their social status, closer to the line of taking violent action, and how it complicates family life for everyone. I want to thank Hillary for what she's done. I also want to thank Al and Tipper Gore, who have done enormously important work on this for years to try to help us deal with the TV issues, the ratings, the V chips, and now the new efforts we've been making with the Internet community to give parents some more control over that, and the efforts we'll have to make to train the parents to figure out to do it, since their kids all know more about it than they do. But this is very important stuff. In June, Tipper Gore's going to host our White House Conference on Mental Health, and the attorney general and Hillary and I were just talking about some of the things we can do to help to make sure that all of our schools have the adequate mentoring and mediation and even mental health services our kids need. All this is very important. And we have to deal with that.

But if you believe that we have special cultural challenges, it seems to me that that's an argument that we ought to bend over backwards to try to remove the opportunities for bad things happening if we have more kids that are vulnerable to doing those things, not an argument that we ought to say, well, we should walk away from that and just try to make sure everybody individually in the whole country never does anything wrong.

And what's the real problem here? The problem is we have another culture in our country that I think has gotten confused about its objectives. We have a huge hunting and sport shooting culture in America, and unlike many of you, I grew up in it. I was 12 years old the first time I took a 22 and shot it at a can on a fence post in the country. I know about this. We always talk about the NRA. The NRA has been powerful not only because they have a lot of money but because they can influence people who vote. And in that culture, people believe everybody should be personally responsible for their actions; if you just punish people who do wrong more harshly, fewer people will do wrong; and everybody tells me I've got a constitutional right to keep and bear arms, so don't fool with me; and every reasonable restriction is just the camel's nose in the tent; and pretty soon they'll come after my shotgun and I'll miss the next duck hunting season. And we smile about that, but there are some people who would be on this platform today, who lost their seats in 1994 because they voted for the Brady bill and they voted for the assault weapons ban, and they did it in areas where people could be frightened.

And the voters had not had enough time, which they did have within two more years, to see that nobody was going to take their gun away. So we have more than one cultural problem here, and I want to make a plea to everybody who is waiting for the next deer season in my home state to think about this in terms of what our reasonable obligations to the larger community of America are.

Do we know for absolutely certain that if we'd had every reasonable law than the ones I'm going to propose here, that none of these school violence things would have happened? No. But we do know one thing for certain; we know there would have been fewer of them, and there would have been fewer kids killed in the last several years in America. We know that for certain. (Applause.) We know that.

And cultures are hard to change, and cultures should never be used to avoid individual responsibility. But we—when we get to where we change, then we wonder—we look back, and we say, "How could we have ever done it otherwise?" Let me ask you something. Next time you get on an airplane, think about how you'd feel if the headline in the morning paper right before you got on the airplane was, "Airport metal detectors and x-ray machines abolished as infringement on Americans' constitutional right to travel." Think about it. That's the headline in the morning paper. Then right next to it there's another headline: "Terrorist groups expanding operations in the United States." And you read the two headlines; and you're getting on the airplane, exercising your constitutional right to travel, which is now no longer "infringed" by the fact that you might have to go through the metal detector twice and take out your money clip or take off your heavily metaled belt, and that somebody is x-raying your luggage as it gets on the airplane. It's unthinkable now, isn't it?

This will become unthinkable, too, that we should ever reverse these things, if we ever have enough sense to do them. (Applause.) Now—but we still have a cultural and a political argument that says to defend Americans' rights to reasonable hunting and sports shooting, we have to defend the indefensible as well. This is—it doesn't make any sense at all unless you're caught up in this sort of web of distorted logic and denial. But Carolyn McCarthy may have made the most important point here. You know, we're all in here preaching to the saved. You wouldn't be here if you didn't agree. But somebody needs to call these members that grew up where I grew up, that lived in the same culture I did, that belong to both parties, and say, "Hey, we've got to make this like airport metal detectors and x-ray machines. This is about our community. This is about our responsibility to our children. This is about protecting our children and the vulnerable children themselves from people who are about to go over the line, here." And this is crazy that we're living in a society that takes no reasonable steps to protect the larger community.

So it's not just the culture of violence that has to change; it's the culture of hunting and sport shooting that has to stop financing efforts to frighten their members who are good, God-fearing, law-abiding, tax-paying citizens out there into believing that every time we try to save a kid's life it's a camel's nose in the tent, you know? (Applause.)

I have had to go to through those metal detectors as many as three times back when I had a real life -- (laughter) -- and I was traveling around because I had all kinds of stuff in there. You know, and every time I started to get a little aggravated, I'd think, "Boy, I don't want that plane to blow up." (Laughter.) You know? Make me go through a dozen times if you want to, and the person behind me.

Now, we've got to think about this in that way. These are the folks we have to reach. When there are no constituents for this movement, the movement will evaporate. When people from rural Pennsylvania and rural West Virginia and rural Colorado and Idaho

start calling their congressmen and saying, "Hey, we can live with this. We can live with this. This is no big deal, you know? I mean, we're just out there doing what we do. We believe—we'll gladly put up with an extra hassle, a little wait, a little this, a little that, because we want to save several thousand kids a year."

That is my challenge to you. (Applause.) That is what is going on. Now here are the things we want to do. A lot of you won't think they're enough, but you remember the culture. You change the culture, we'll change the laws. You change the message, we'll do it. And none of them have anything to do with anybody's legitimate right to hunt.

First of all, we ought to strengthen the Brady law. (Applause.) It's kept 250,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers from guns. The states now have the Insta-Check system, which is good. The mandatory waiting period has expired; that's bad, because we need it, in addition to the Insta-Check system, to give a cooling-off period to people who are in a fit of rage. It's important.

The law that we would present, the act, will also prevent juveniles who commit violent crimes from ever buying a gun. It would apply the Brady law's prohibition to juvenile violence.

It would require Brady background checks on anyone who wants to buy explosives -- very important. (Applause.)

And it would abolish, at long last, as Senator Feinstein said, a dangerous loophole that was likely exploited in Littleton, which allows people to buy weapons at gun shows without any background checks at all. (Applause.) Now—now you need to go make this case on this gun show deal. I don't know how many of you have ever been to one of these gun shows. I've been to gun shows in rural America, and people walk around, you know, and they got their—they've got their cars, and they've got their trunk open, and people walk in and say, "This is nice, and that's nice, and this is a hundred-year-old rifle," and blah, blah, blah. And then they say, "Aww, this is just too much hassle, you know." And the people pay cash, and you know, nobody, you know—so it's going to be a hassle for them. It's worth it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: That's right.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: It's worth it. (Applause.) And we're sorry; it's worth it. You don't have to pretend it won't be a hassle. Tell them you know it will be a hassle. It's worth it. People's lives are at stake here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Amen.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: What they started—what these shows started out doing, which was a good way for people who lived in rural areas—started out in primarily rural areas, who enjoy hunting and are interested in different kinds of weapons, to have an interesting experience on a weekend afternoon, has turned out to be a gaping loophole through which criminals and deranged people and other people get guns they could not otherwise get.

And so we have to say—we haven't asked you to abolish your gun shows, but we've asked you to undergo the inconvenience necessary to save more lives. We don't have to be insensitive, we just have to be determined. But I'm telling you, if we don't do something about this gun show loophole, we're going to continue to have serious, serious problems. And it's very important. (Applause.)

The second thing we've got to do is to strengthen the assault weapons ban, to close the loophole that allows dealers to sell older high-capacity ammunition magazines manufactured abroad. Now, I bet you when Senator Feinstein was talking about this, you thought, "Now, who in the world could be against this?" I actually had a conversation with a member of Congress who said to me—serious, a good person, who's a really good person—when we were doing this back in '94, a really good person, this person I was talking to, who told me—

(laughter) -- let me tell you—I just want you to understand what the argument was—he said, "But you've got to understand, we've got people who use these bigger magazines for certain kinds of sport contests." And I said, "Well, so what?" (Laughter.) But he said, "They'll beat me if I vote for this." I said, "They'll beat you if they think all you're doing is making their life miserable because some Washington bureaucrat asked you to do it. If you can explain to them that it's worth a minor alteration in their sporting habits to save people's lives, they won't beat you." But my point is, you've got to help these people. See, you hear this, and you think, "God, this is a no-brainer, this is a hundred-to-nothing deal, who in the wide world could ever be"—you have to understand, there is another culture out there, and almost everybody in it is God fearing, law abiding, tax paying, and they show up when they're needed, and they don't like this because they don't understand that if they do what you're asking them to do, they can save a lot of lives.

And we have got to fix this. This is just pure mathematics you're going to have fewer people die if you get rid of these magazines. So you need to go out there where the problem is and debate your fellow citizens and discuss it with them. It's important.

The third thing the legislation would do is to raise the legal age of handgun possession from 18 to 21 years. (Applause.) It would also strengthen our zero tolerance for guns in schools, which, as one of the previous members said, had led us to 6,000 suspensions or expulsions last year, by requiring schools to report to the police any student who brings a gun to school and requiring that the student get counseling.

That, I think, is very important.

The provision holding adults criminally responsible would only apply but—this is quite important—but it would apply if they recklessly failed to keep firearms out of the reach of young people. This would mandate a steep increase in penalties for adults who transfer guns illegally to juveniles; it would require child safety locks to be sold with all new guns. (Applause.) Finally, it would crack down on illegal gun trafficking, doubling the number of cities now working with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to trace every gun seized by the police. I know this is very important to Congresswoman McCarthy. (Applause.) It would require that dealers submit information not only on the guns they sell, but on used guns which are often very hard for law enforcement agents to trace. It would significantly increase penalties for gun runners caught trafficking large numbers of firearms. It would establish a national system, as soon as it's feasible, to

limit handgun purchases to one a month, following the lead of Virginia. (Applause.) You know, I've got to say, this is very interesting. When we were going over the list of things we wanted to propose, some people said, "Well, that might be a loser because it sounds to people who care about this like that's too many, and, you know, what is this?" You know, the states that have had big problems in the past with lots of illegal gun purchases and guns then being used for illegal purposes—Virginia did this and it really helped them. This was a big deal. And, I just talked to Senator Robb about this a couple of days ago, and he said, "You know, all I can tell you is it's working in our state." So I would ask you to seriously consider what this might mean for our efforts to control the law enforcement aspects of this.

So, these are the things that I wanted to say. But I hope you'll remember what I said to you about the culture. We do have to keep working on the culture. Hillary's right about it, Al and Tipper Gore are right about it. We've got a lot of responsibilities. We've got to keep working on the services that kids—we've even got to work on making, helping parents actually communicate with their children.

One senator called me the night before last and said he'd had a town meeting in his state with children. And he asked how many of the school children had actually talked with their parents about what happened in Littleton, and only 10 percent of the kids raised their hand. And one child said, "I had to go and turn off the television and tell my parents we were going to talk about it." She said, "They're just scared. You know, they're scared. They didn't know how to talk about it." So there are all these cultural issues. And then there's this big cultural issue of the gun and sport hunting culture.

And I hope that—a lot of my folks at home might take offense at what I said today, but I'm trying to help explain them to you. And I felt comfortable taking on these issues, and I thought maybe I was in a unique position to take on all these gun issues all these years because of where I grew up and because I understand how people think who don't agree with this. But I'm telling you, we've got to keep working until people start thinking about this stuff the same way they think about x-rays and metal detectors at airports. That's the goal. It—we have to redefine the national community so that we have a shared obligation to save children's lives, and we've got to get out of this crazy denial that this won't make a difference. This—it's crazy, it won't make—just because it won't make all the difference doesn't make—mean it won't make a difference. It will make a difference. (Applause.) And so—so I implore you to remember what these members have said. I implore you to go out and get people going at the grass roots, as Carolyn McCarthy said. We need help. We can pass all this if the American people want it bad enough. We can pass it all if the American people want it badly enough. And we don't need to go through another Littleton for the American people to want it badly enough. You can help make sure that happens.

Thank you. (Applause.)