

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

School  
Violence

April 22, 1999

**SCHOOL VIOLENCE DISCUSSION WITH STUDENTS**

**DATE:** April 22, 1999  
**LOCATION:** T.C. Williams High School  
Alexandria, VA  
**BRIEFING TIME:** 11:45am - 12:00pm  
**EVENT TIME:** 12:30pm - 1:45pm  
**FROM:** Bruce Reed, Thurgood Marshall, Jr.

**I. PURPOSE**

To have a discussion with high school students on the recent incident in Littleton, Colorado and on school safety issues.

**II. BACKGROUND**

You will participate in a discussion with 25 high school students enrolled in an Advanced Placement government class, student conflict mediators, and school faculty. This discussion will also be broadcast live into classrooms nationwide by *Channel 1*, a classroom cable network. The students in the A.P. Government class have been discussing the incident in Littleton, CO, and have specifically focused on: 1) whether this kind of event could happen at their own school; 2) what role the federal government can play in preventing school violence; 3) how young people get access to weapons and explosives; and 4) why the parents and friends of the suspects were unable to detect a problem before the violent incident occurred.

T.C. Williams High School, part of the Alexandria City Public School System, is a large, urban high school with approximately 1,800 students of numerous racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. The students at the school come from more than 84 countries in the world and speak more than 56 languages. Last June, following the Springfield, Oregon school shooting, Attorney General Janet Reno and Secretary Richard Riley participated in a listening session on school safety with students at this high school.

Alexandria City Public Schools have placed a high priority on school safety and security in their district. Every school is equipped with a team of professionals, including a registered nurse, school psychologist, social worker, and guidance counselor, and also has

the support of a uniformed police officer serving as school resource officer. Four years ago, the Alexandria City Public Schools also established "zero tolerance" policies for weapons and drugs, which the school system credits for its subsequent decline in the number of incidents that could have resulted in suspensions. Dr. Herb Berg, Superintendent of Alexandria City Public Schools, participated in a school safety event with you at the White House in March 1998, and discussed these steps the district is taking to ensure safe schools.

The Alexandria City Public Schools also has a conflict resolution/peer mediation program, which provides special training for students starting in seventh grade. Students are trained to listen to both sides of an issue and help guide their fellow students toward peaceful resolutions of their conflicts. The peer mediators that will participate in today's discussion currently participate in this volunteer program, and mediate the conflicts of other T.C. Williams students.

### **III. PARTICIPANTS**

#### Briefing Participants:

Bruce Reed  
Doug Sosnik  
Loretta Ucelli  
Kris Balderston  
Lowell Weiss

#### Event Participants:

John Porter, Principal, T.C. Williams High School  
Ellen Harmon, Teacher, T.C. Williams High School  
Barbara Finney, Crisis Coordinator, T.C. Williams High School  
25 High School Seniors enrolled in an A.P. Government Class  
4 Peer Mediators/High School Seniors and Juniors

### **IV. PRESS PLAN**

Pool Press. This discussion will also be broadcast live into classrooms nationwide by *Channel 1*, a classroom cable network which reaches 8 million middle and senior high school students and 500,000 educators.

### **V. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS**

- You will enter the Media Center, accompanied by John Porter, the principal of T.C. Williams High School, and will take your seat with the discussion participants.
- John Porter will make a brief statement and introduce you.
- You will make remarks and open a discussion with the students and faculty.
- You will close the discussion and depart the Media Center.
- You will proceed to the Auditorium, greet overflow students, and depart.

**VI. REMARKS**

To be provided by speechwriting.

**VII. ATTACHMENT**

-Administration Record on Promoting School Safety.

# PROMOTING SCHOOL SAFETY, PREVENTING YOUTH VIOLENCE AND ENCOURAGING LEARNING

--The Clinton Administration Record --

## MAKING OUR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES SAFER AND DRUG-FREE

**The White House Conference on School Safety.** In October 1998, the President held the first ever White House Conference on School Safety to convene experts, parents, principals, students, law enforcement, and local leaders from communities that experienced school shootings to discuss broad issues of school safety and youth violence and share the wealth of information we have on these issues. The Conference provided an opportunity for Americans to learn more about how they can make their own schools and communities safer. Over 600 satellite sites across the country were able to participate in the Conference.

**A New Federal Response for Violent Deaths in Schools.** President Clinton has proposed a \$12 million School Emergency Response to Violence -- or Project SERV -- in his FY 2000 budget to help schools and local communities respond to school-related violent deaths, such as those that occurred last year in Jonesboro, Arkansas; Paducah, Kentucky; Pearl, Mississippi; and Springfield, Oregon. Developed with input from local officials and educators in these and other communities, Project SERV will enable the federal government to assist local communities in much the same way FEMA assists in response to natural disasters.

**Targeted Resources for Schools with Serious Crime Problems.** To help give schools with serious crime problems the tools they need to put the security of our children first, the President announced a new \$65 million initiative to hire up to 2,000 community police and School Resource Officers to work in schools -- and to train police, educators and other members of the community to help recognize the early warning signs of violence.

**Reforms to Help Make All Schools Safe, Disciplined and Drug-Free.** At the White House Conference on School Safety, President Clinton announced the outline of his plan for a significant overhaul of the nearly \$600 million Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Program. Under the President's proposal, schools will be required to adopt rigorous, comprehensive school safety plans that include: tough, but fair, discipline policies; safe passage to and from schools; effective drug and violence policies and programs; annual school safety and drug use report cards; links to after school programs; efforts to involve parents; and crisis management plans.

**A Community-Wide Response to School Safety and Youth Violence.** To help communities throughout the country promote a coordinated, comprehensive response to school safety, the President launched a new Safe Schools -Healthy Students initiative designed to help 50 cities develop and implement community-wide school safety plans. Earlier this month, the Departments of Justice, Education, and Health and Human Services announced that they will provide over \$180 million this year, and a total of \$380 million over three years through the Initiative for communities to fund comprehensive school safety plans that include anti-truancy initiatives, mentoring, mental health services, conflict resolution programs, school resource officers, and more -- helping to prevent youth violence before it occurs. Communities will have until June 1, 1999 to apply for the funds.

**Forging School-Based Partnerships Between Schools and Law Enforcement.** Under the new School-Based Partnerships grant program, the Clinton Administration released \$16.4 million in grants to 155 law enforcement agencies in September. The School-Based Partnerships grants will be used by policing agencies to work with schools and community-based organizations to address crime at and around schools. This initiative emphasizes using principles of community policing and problem-solving methods to address the causes of school-related crime. The grants will help forge or strengthen partnerships between local law enforcement and schools to focus on school crime, drug use and discipline problems.

**Helping Teachers and Principals Respond to the Early Warning Signs of Troubled Youth.** President Clinton directed the Secretary of Education and the Attorney General to develop a guide to help teachers and principals identify and respond to the early warning signs of troubled youth that can lead to school violence. In August 1998, the Departments of Justice and Education released *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools*. This guide provides schools and communities with information on how to identify the early warning signs and take action steps to prevent and respond to school violence. Every school in the nation received a copy of the guide, and additional copies can be obtained through the Department of Education website.

**Issuing the First Annual Report on School Safety.** In December 1997, President Clinton called for an Annual Report on School Safety, which was released on October 15, 1998 and sent to every school in the nation. The report includes: an analysis of all existing national school crime data and an overview of state and local crime reporting; examples of schools and strategies that are successfully reducing school violence, drug use and class disruption; actions that parents can take locally to combat school crime; and resources available to schools and communities to help create safe, disciplined and drug-free schools.

**Enforcing Zero Tolerance for Guns and Other Weapons in Schools.** In October 1994, President Clinton signed into law the Gun-Free Schools Act, requiring states to have in effect a law requiring local education agencies (LEAs) to expel students who bring guns to school. The President issued a Presidential Directive later that month to enforce "zero tolerance" for guns in schools, a policy requiring the expulsion of students who bring guns to schools. In school year 1996-97, the U.S. Department of Education estimates that, under zero tolerance policies, 6,093 students were expelled from public schools for bringing a firearm to school.

**Supporting Civic, Community and Faith-Based Organizations.** Recognizing the important role that civic, community and faith-based organizations can play in reducing crime, the Administration launched a new Values-Based Violence Prevention Initiative to make \$2.2 million in grants available to 16 community-based collaboratives, including religiously-affiliated organizations, that target youth violence, gangs, truancy, and other juvenile problems by promoting common-sense values and responsibility.

**Providing Safe After-School Opportunities for More Than a Million Children a Year.** Last year (FY98), the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program was expanded to \$200 million. This funding is already supporting hundreds of programs in rural and urban schools in 44 states and the District of Columbia that provide school-based after-school programs, including on weekends and during the summer. This year, the President proposed to triple this initiative -- to \$600 million -- to provide safe and educational after-school opportunities for up to 1.1 million school-age children in communities across the country. In addition, the Education Department released a report in June 1998, titled *Safe and Smart: Making the After-School Hours Work for Kid*. This report shows that after-school programs can lower juvenile crime and improve academic performance. *Safe and Smart* was sent to every school district in the country.

**Cracking Down on Truancy.** Truancy prevention initiatives have been shown to keep more children in school and dramatically reduce daytime crime. The Education Department issued a guidebook to the 15,000 school districts nationwide which outlines the central characteristics of a comprehensive truancy prevention policy and highlights model initiatives in cities and towns across the country. Since then, the Education Department has provided grants to local school districts to develop innovative truancy prevention programs of the kind described in the guidebook.

**Encouraging Schools to Adopt School Uniform Policies.** School uniforms have been found to be a promising strategy to reduce violence while promoting discipline and respect in school. Because of this, the Clinton Administration has encouraged schools to consider adopting school uniform policies by sharing with every school district a school uniforms manual prepared by the Department of Education in consultation with local communities and the Department of Justice. Since the President highlighted school uniforms, a growing number of schools have adopted these policies including: New York City, Dade County, San Antonio, Houston, Chicago and Boston.

**Supporting Curfews at the Local Level.** Community curfews are designed to help keep children out of harm's way and enhance community safety. Because of their success, President Clinton has encouraged communities to adopt curfew policies. A 1997 survey by the U.S. Conference of Mayors has shown that 276 of 347 cities surveyed -- or 80 percent -- had youth curfew laws, up from 70 percent in 1995.

**Developed a Comprehensive Anti-Gang and Youth Violence Strategy.** President Clinton has proposed a comprehensive strategy to (1) target gangs and violent youths with tougher punishments and by expanding anti-gang task forces and the use of racketeering statutes (i.e., RICO) for gang-related offenses; (2) crack down on kids and guns by prohibiting violent juveniles from buying guns and increasing penalties for selling handguns to youths; and (3) keep kids off the streets and out of trouble by expanding after-school programs and promoting anti-truancy initiatives and youth curfews.

**Keeping Guns Out of the Hands of Children.** A number of laws and initiatives are keeping guns out of the hands of children and away from criminals. For instance, since the Brady Law's enactment, 250,000 felons, fugitives and stalkers have been denied handguns, and the 1994 Crime Bill banned 19 of the deadliest assault weapons and their copies -- keeping assault weapons off America's streets. The Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative (YCGII) is cracking down on the illegal gun markets that supply firearms to juveniles and criminals in 37 target cities. The ATF has already traced more than 77,000 crime guns in the YCGII cities, which has led to the investigation and arrest of hundreds of illegal gun traffickers supplying juveniles and criminals. The Administration's FY 2000 budget proposal proposes adding ATF agents to new YCGII cities to assist in gun trafficking investigations. In addition to these programs, President Clinton signed a directive to every federal agency, requiring child safety locking devices with every handgun issued to federal law enforcement officers. And, in an historic agreement, eight major gun manufacturers have voluntarily agreed to provide child safety locking devices with all their handguns, helping to protect our children.

**Encouraging Conflict Resolution.** The Departments of Education and Justice have developed and distributed 40,000 conflict resolution guides to schools and community organizations, providing guidance on how to develop effective conflict resolution programs; Education and Justice are training community officials and educators on these conflict resolution measures.

**Targeting Young People with a National Anti-Drug Media Campaign.** In July 1998, President Clinton launched the national expansion of the Anti-Drug Media Campaign first proposed in last year's drug strategy and budget. The 5-year, \$2 billion campaign is designed to let teens know -- when they turn on the television, listen to the radio, or surf the Net -- that drugs are dangerous, wrong and can kill you.

**Building and Strengthening 14,000 Community Anti-Drug Coalitions.** In 1997, President Clinton signed into law the bipartisan Drug-Free Communities Support Program. Over the next five years this program will provide \$143.5 million to help community coalitions rid their streets of drugs -- the coalitions are made up of young people, parents, media, law enforcement, religious and other civic organizations and school officials. Under this program, the President recently announced new Federal assistance to enhance grassroots efforts in 93 communities in 46 states to prevent youth drug abuse. This assistance will fund the work of broad-based community coalitions to target young people's use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco.

- ① HRC staff / Ron re videogames
- ② DOJ / counselors - cops flexibility
- ③ Hotline?
- ④ Leak list.  
- Holder GMA etc.
- ⑤ Violence chip for computer
- ⑥ Character education
- ⑦ School psychologists
- ⑧ DOJ conf call
- ⑨ BOXER
- ⑩ JUAN EPSTEIN

- 514-4969

- Barry Meier

- Time of parents

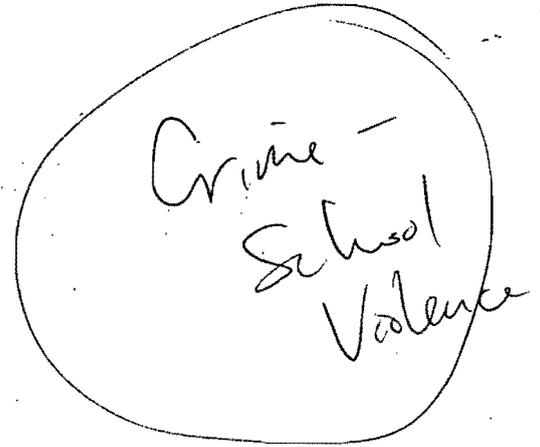
I wanted to make sure you saw this report. When the President is in Springfield tomorrow, I think he should offer to convene a meeting at the White House with the Department of Justice, Education, HHS, FEMA, the communities affected, schools, law enforcement, elected officials and others to begin to seek preventive solutions. I wouldn't elevate this to a Task Force - but the Departments of Justice and Education could do one as a result of this meeting.

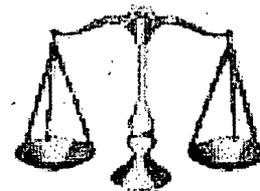
I think this shows a willingness on our part to help build on the contacts these small communities have already tried to make.

I am sure the Mayor will raise this with the President as he did on the call we had yesterday. Let's be proactive.

  
Lynn Cutler

June 12, 1998

  
Crime -  
School  
Violence



YOUTH CRIME  
&  
SCHOOL VIOLENCE

PREVENTION PROGRAM

*CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, OREGON  
SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT  
LANE COUNTY, OREGON  
CITY OF EUGENE, OREGON*

*JUNE 1998*

**DRAFT**

DRAFT

UNITED FRONT AGENDA  
FOR THE PREVENTION OF YOUTH CRIME AND SCHOOL VIOLENCE  
JUNE 1998

In the wake of the recent shootings at Springfield's Thurston High School on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1998, the United Front delegation, comprised of the City of Springfield, Oregon, the Springfield School District, the City of Eugene, Oregon and Lane County, Oregon, has formulated the following Action Plan for the Prevention of Youth Crime and School Violence. A comprehensive plan which includes flexibility for local jurisdictions in educating youth about gun use, expressing emotions and combating youth violence is critical in our efforts to prevent another incident like the one we experienced in May.

The Action Plan addresses a number of issues and areas for federal, state and local involvement in this area. The document, which is a work in progress, outlines a variety of strategies that will be helpful to the Springfield-Eugene-Lane County communities and others around the nation in addressing program and resource needs. This is a preliminary agenda of programs to address juvenile crime and prevention issues. Increased investment in prevention and intervention programs is critical if we are to stop the violence, assist troubled youth and protect the citizens of our communities.

**Convene a National Conference on Violence in Schools** - As with the recent meeting of communities affected by school violence in Memphis, we request consideration of a National Conference on Violence in Schools to be coordinated by an independent sponsor with the participation of the Clinton Administration, and federal, state and local leaders to share information on successful programs for identifying and dealing with troubled youth and preventing crime and violence in our schools and our communities at large. The Conference will place a national spotlight on this critical issue and address key issues and programs which can be adapted in communities across the United States, possibly before the 1998-99 school year begins. We propose that the conference be held in the Springfield-Eugene-Lane County community

**Amendments to S. 10/H.R. 3** - The Violent and Repeat Juvenile Offender Act of 1997 which passed the House of Representatives last year and is currently pending action in the Senate, focuses on detention of youth offenders. The United Front seeks to modify the legislation by including a package of amendments that would permit more funding to be used for intervention and prevention programs. The ultimate goal is to stop youth violence from occurring BEFORE it happens, rather than reacting to incidents on a piecemeal, lock-em-up basis. In addition, it is critical that programs be funded sufficiently to address the problems faced in each community. Low levels of funding for programs will not allow them to adequately address the problems they seek to correct.

Oregon has already acted to prosecute some juvenile offenders in adult court and has therefore acted consistently with the intent of S. 10/H.R. 3. It is vitally important that any legislation enacted be flexible enough to allow Oregon to qualify for funding equal to other states that have not progressed to the same extent as Oregon. The legislation should also allow local officials to determine the most appropriate programs to address the most prominent issues in their communities.

**Disaster Relief for Communities Experiencing Shootings in Schools** - Similar to the programs of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) which reacts in times of natural disasters by providing emergency disaster relief, the Cities of Springfield and Eugene, the Springfield School District and Lane County propose a fund which would be established by the President within the Department of Education, to provide emergency funding to address issues resulting from such incidents as the one experienced in Springfield. This School Emergency Relief Fund would provide funding for immediate concerns such as counselors to help cope with the situation, police officer support, hospital emergency treatment funds and related issues. A federal relief program would go a long way to assisting communities such as Springfield that may be unable to provide such funding.

The City and School District are currently setting up an assistance center to provide a place where victims of the shooting can go to access funds that have been donated to them. A group of community volunteers is actively involved in making decisions regarding the use of the donated funds. The Springfield School District is currently staffing this assistance center, but will not be able to do so for much longer. An additional \$200,000 in federal funding from a disaster relief program would further these efforts and keep them going for a long enough period of time to assist the victims.

**Counselors in Schools Program** - Develop a national program, similar to President Clinton's Community Oriented Police (COPS) program which would provide funding for Counselors in Schools. Currently in the Springfield and Eugene school systems, the number of counselors available relative to the number of students is inadequate. With the current situation, it is impossible to foresee problems which may develop or to recognize youth who may need extra help or support. A Counselors in Schools program would provide more help in schools so that we would be able to identify troubled youth before they act out and provide them with support or assistance to help them cope with their anger, rage, and other emotional issues or address drug and gang issues before they reach a violent peak.

In the short term, the Springfield School District has identified a need for additional counseling and intervention for the next three years at a cost of \$430,000. This counseling support would assist students, staff and parents impacted by the traumatic event at Thurston High School.

Looking beyond the immediate needs at Thurston High School, the long range plan involves a nationwide program of Counselors in Schools to provide support and assistance to the troubled and at risk youth found in most communities, including youth who are homeless, runaways,

chronic truants, dropouts, expelled, on parole or probation. Counselors would provide counseling support and transition services to assist these youth in successfully transitioning into full time regular or alternative educational programs or the work force.

**Provide Additional Funding to Current Programs at the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs** - There are already several programs within the Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs (OJJDP) which are funded at low levels or unfunded, that could be used to address some of the critical issues in intervening and preventing youth violence in schools. Some of the programs that could provide benefits include: the Conflict Resolution Program, the Community Prevention Grants program, the School Resource Officers Program, School Safety Centers program, Mentoring Programs and others.

**Provide Additional Funding for Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services Programs** - In addition to the OJJDP at the Department of Justice, there are several programs within the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services that address the prevention and early intervention issues of young people. Programs such as Head Start could be expanded so that instructors would be on the look out for and be able to divert antisocial children from a path leading to adjustment problems. The Family Preservation Funds program within the Administration for Children and Families would also address child protective services and focus on community safety net efforts. By addressing the issues at the earliest possible stage, more serious issues and problems can be avoided. Another important program at the Department of Education which could be used to address some of the issues raised here is the Safe and Drug Free Schools Program.

**Promote Gun Safety** - Promote programs to encourage gun safety and to educate youth on the use of guns.

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The local jurisdictions in the cities of Springfield, Eugene and Lane County have been working together for a number of years with our state and federal partners to develop programs of local benefit. Some of these programs would be beneficial in addressing the issues outlined here. They include:

**Juvenile Justice Center/Youth Campus** - Through a public/private partnership, Lane County is developing a youth campus to serve juvenile offenders. Capital construction and site acquisition is financed through a \$39 million general obligation bond measure approved by the voters of Lane County in May 1995. The campus will provide a mix of secure custody and residential treatment programs that will allow Lane County juveniles who are in trouble to remain in their own community. Local and state facilities are overflowing and dangerous youths are being released without treatment.

The campus will be developed adjacent to and around the current Skipworth Detention Center and the County Department of Youth Services offices. Groundbreaking activities began October 16,

1997.

**National Guard** - A critical element in the development of the Youth Campus is the existing site of the National Guard Armory. It currently stands in the middle of the property being developed for the Juvenile Justice Center. The County has been working with the National Guard for several years to resite their facility and the Guard has been receptive. In the FY 1997 Military Construction Appropriations legislation, \$1.14 million was included for design work on the new National Guard facility. Since that time, there have been a series of delays at the National Guard in acquiring and developing a site. We are currently requesting that the National Guard make this a top priority and that funding be provided to construct the new National Guard facility.

**The Community Youth Learning Center** - The establishment of Community Youth Learning Centers (CYLC) to provide effective services to enable troubled and unsupervised youth to receive critical assessment and counseling services is essential in preventing and reducing youth crime and violence. The Community Youth Learning Centers is a program which combines educational services with assessment, counseling, transition support and community service activities.

City, county and state agencies as well as the schools, note that the troubled youth each serves have a common set of characteristics, but the services provided do not necessarily meet the most critical needs for prevention. By centralizing and coordinating services, the multi-dimensional CYLC program addresses some of the critical needs of troubled youth who are:

- ▶ Transitioning from residential placement or on parole or probation;
- ▶ Expelled from school;
- ▶ Homeless;
- ▶ Dropouts or truants and are at risk for becoming involved in juvenile crime, drugs or serious problems.

The Community Youth Learning Centers would work to successfully transition youth to full time educational programs or the work force. The Center's mission to help reduce delinquency, youth violence and poverty would be addressed by offering well-supervised activities and services including:

- ▶ Comprehensive assessment for mental health, drug and alcohol and other identified risk factors, followed by the development of an individual plan to address their needs;
- ▶ Counseling targeting the specific needs and risk factors of each youth based on their assessment and individual plan;
- ▶ Social skill development through anger management, responsible decision making and other related classes;
- ▶ Flexible academic programs to help students develop effective study skills and to earn credit in order to return successfully to full time educational programs;
- ▶ Community service activities to develop a sense of commitment and belonging to the

community;

- ▶ Counseling for transitioning students into full time educational programs or the work force.

This proposal would establish Community Youth Learning Centers to provide critical counseling services to troubled youth who are at risk of delinquency, violence or other criminal activity. Each center would provide critical counseling and assessment services to troubled youth by offering:

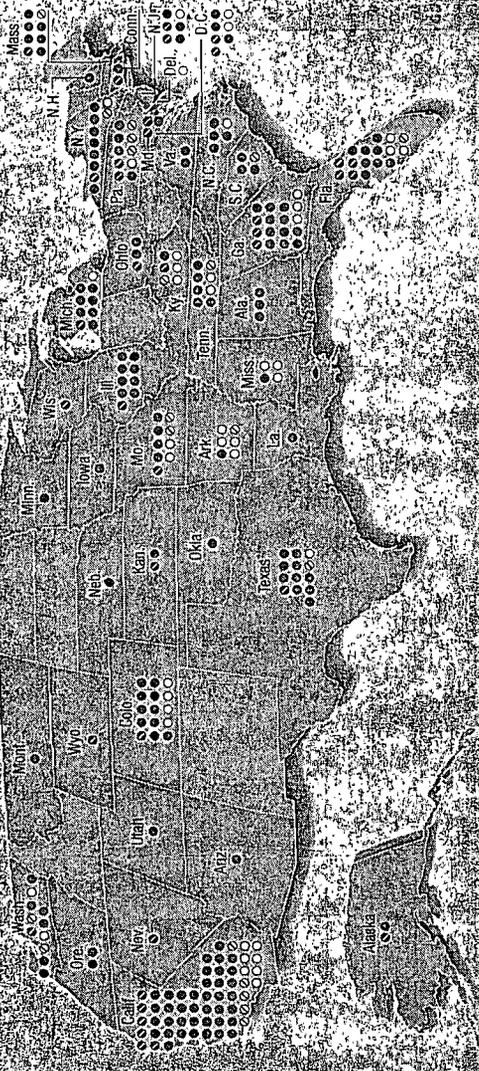
- ▶ Comprehensive assessment for mental health, drug and alcohol and other risk factors;
- ▶ Individual and group counseling addressing high risk behaviors;
- ▶ Transition counseling for a period of time before and after students move from the Center to full time regular or alternative educational programs or the work force.

# Background Death At School

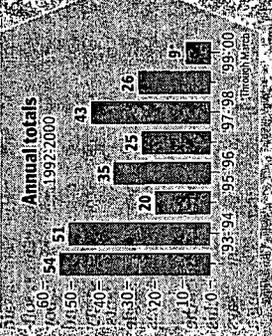
**The Victims**

- Male student
- Female student
- Male adult
- Female adult
- Multiple shootings

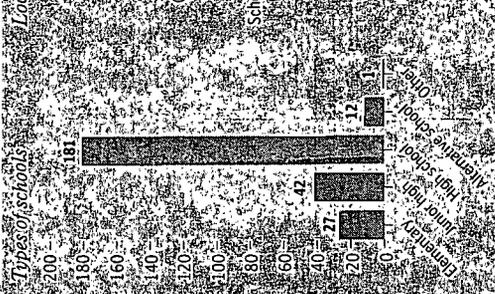
**Across the Nation** 263 deaths since 1992



Shootings are the most common cause of violent death in schools, and while school shootings have declined in recent years, they are now more likely to result in multiple killings than they were in the early 1990s, according to a report by the National School Safety Center.



## Where They Happened



## What Happened



THE WASHINGTON POST

Washington Post, 4/16/00

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 7, 1999

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT  
UPON DEPARTURE

The South Lawn

10:38 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. Tomorrow, I will be visiting some of the communities that were so terribly damaged by the tornadoes this week. Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas, with the people of Tennessee who also endured terrible storms and destruction.

Before I leave, I'd like to make comments on a couple of other matters. First, on the new economic report issued today. We received more good news for our working families. Unemployment is 4.3 percent, with 234,000 new jobs added last month alone.

African American unemployment is at its lowest level on record. And real wages, after declining 4.3 percent in the 12 years before I took office, have now risen over six percent in the last six years. The American economy continues to see a remarkable combination of strong growth, job creation and low inflation. Our economic strategy continues to be the right strategy for prosperity, and it is the one we should follow as we work to strengthen Social Security and Medicare for the 21st century.

It's worth remembering that the move from economic stagnation to sustained prosperity is not the only turnaround our nation has seen in the last six years. We also see the crime rate falling, the welfare rolls falling, the teen pregnancy rate falling, drunk driving going down, a host of other social ills now easing, even though, for so long they seemed destined only to worsen.

The American people, in homes and communities all across this country are working hard at the grass-roots level to turn around every one of these social problems, and others are doing their part. That is the kind of national commitment we need to protect our children from violence. I believe, more than anything else, we need a grass-roots effort which involves every single American, from the White House down to the smallest community -- a national campaign that draws out everyone's commitment, all our resources and depends upon everyone taking responsibility.

On Monday, as you know, we'll have a White House meeting here, a strategy session to seek out the best ideas for this effort, from people who can really make a difference -- parents and young people, teachers and religious leaders, law enforcement, gun manufacturers, representatives of the entertainment industry, and those of us here in government. Together, we will talk about how we can shield children from gratuitous violence, keep parents involved in their children's lives, reach out to troubled young people early enough, and do more to keep guns out of their reach.

We will not ask who takes the blame, but how we can all take responsibility, and I will challenge everyone there and everyone

MORE

in America to do their part. We know this kind of sustained, organized effort can work. Let me just give you one example. Four years ago, I asked for a national campaign to reduce teen pregnancy. Today, under the leadership of Governor Tom Kean, former Governor of New Jersey, and now the President of Drew University -- that campaign is finding what works, spreading it to other communities, working with the media to send the right message to our children.

Two years ago, I called for a national effort by businesses to hire people off welfare, to make sure the welfare reform effort would work. Today, under the leadership of Eli Segal the Welfare to Work partnership has grown to 10,000 companies that have helped us move more than 400,000 people from the welfare rolls to the job rolls.

Time and again, we have seen when citizens, businesses, communities, nonprofits and government take responsibility to work together, we can overcome any challenge. We are turning the tide on all kinds of social problems. Now, we must turn our intense efforts to this issue of violence. We have remarkable Americans who have been working on it for sometime now, with real success in community after community; you will hear from them on Monday. But, obviously, in the aftermath of what happened in Colorado and the school shootings of the last two years, we have to do more. I'm very much looking forward to this meeting and to getting to work with Americans all over our country to give our children the safe childhoods they deserve.

Thank you very much.

Q Mr. President, will you accept a military pay raise as part of the emergency supplemental, the Kosovo emergency, supplemental bill?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, as you know, we're supporting a military pay raise, and I don't think there's any difference in when the Congress and I think it should take effect. So there may be some -- I have to get briefed on this -- you know, I've been gone to Europe, but my understanding is, the only difference in the two bills is at what point they fund it and whether they take it out from under the ceilings of next year's budget; not when the military actually gets it.

So I think we're all -- my view is, at least when I left to go to Europe, we were all for the same pay raise going into effect at the same time. And I understand why Congress wants to advance fund it and I'd like to see the bill loaded up with as little extraneous spending as possible. But we are going to give a military pay raise, we're all committed to it, and we just have to work out what the best way to do it is.

Q Mr. President, do you insist that the American Commander of NATO be in charge of whatever forces wind up as peacekeepers in Kosovo?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think the best thing for me to say now is what -- I think it will work best if we have a system like we had in Bosnia where there was U.N. approval and NATO was a the core of the force, but there was Russian participation, there was Ukrainian participation, there was participation from a lot of other countries, and the command issues were worked out by and large in three different segments of the country where primary responsibility was taken in one section by the United States working with Russia, in another by Britain and another by France. There may be some other way to do it in Kosovo; I don't want to prejudge all the details.

The important thing -- I don't want neither to add nor subtract from the basic conditions that we have said we believe are

necessary to make this work. That is, the refugees go home to safety and autonomy, Serb forces out and an international security force in, with NATO at the core. Anything I say today, while we're working hard to try to push this and to try to gain more converts and get more people involved in this, would be, I think, a mistake, except to say I think that what we did in Bosnia was functional.

But I think it's important for the United States and for our allies neither to add nor subtract from the basic conditions that we have said all along are absolutely essential to make this work.

Q Mr. President, do all the Serb forces have to come out, or is that negotiable?

END

10:46 A.M. EDT

BRUCE REED

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HOUSE

PRESS RELEASE

Press Secretary

May 7, 1999

PRESS BRIEFING  
BY  
THE PRESIDENT'S DOMESTIC POLICY ADVISOR BRUCE REED

The Briefing Room

12:18 P.M. EDT

MR. REED: Good afternoon. Okay, let me just tell you briefly, I'm Bruce Reed, the President's Domestic Policy Advisor. Let me tell you briefly about what we have planned for Monday, and we've got a couple of handouts that they'll get to you at the end of the briefing about who is coming and about our parallel efforts on this that we've done in the past.

As the President said this morning, we'll be having a brainstorming session on Monday to lay the groundwork for a national campaign to reduce youth violence similar to what we have done in the past in creating a national campaign to reduce teen pregnancy and in launching a Welfare to Work partnership to encourage businesses to hire people off of welfare.

There will be a broad representation of a number of relevant players on Monday. It will be about 50 people from outside the administration, including leaders from the entertainment industry, representatives of gun owners and the gun industry, religious leaders, parents, young people, experts in the field of youth violence, and they'll meet for about two and a half hours to talk about ideas for this campaign.

And then out of it, we will form a nonprofit organization along the lines of the two I mentioned, the teen pregnancy campaign and the Welfare to Work partnership that will work in the weeks and months to come to identify what works in reducing youth violence, help to spread what's working in one community to other communities and do research to evaluate that success, and work with the media and others to make sure they're sending the right signals about youth violence.

Q Up until now, just about everybody who was involved with this has sort of been pointing fingers at the other -- gun manufacturers as parents' responsibility, turns blame on Hollywood and CD rom manufacturers for putting out these gory video games, they in turn say it's the fault of parents. Do you have any specific specifications from either gun manufacturers or Hollywood or people who produce these video games?

MR. REED: We'll have to see. But certainly, the reason we're having this session is because we think it's time for all sectors of society to step up to the plate and take responsibility. We're not interested in pointing fingers; we want to find solutions and we think that there is a lot that each of the groups I mentioned can do to take more responsibility.

Q Mr. Reed, speaking of stepping up to the plate, Diego Tintorero is a citizen of Miami. He ran on to the field of the Baltimore Orioles/Cuba game carrying a sign: "Human rights for

MORE

Cuba." For this, he was chased, repeatedly slugged and body slammed by a much larger man, a Cuban umpire named Cesar Valdez, who was not arrested for this assault and battery by the Baltimore police who did arrest Tintorero for trespassing.

And my question is, as you are the President's Domestic Advisor, do you regard this as equal justice under law, and do you agree with Orioles owner Angelos that we didn't want defections in Baltimore, which was once identified as part of the land of the free and home of the brave?

MR. REED: Well, first, I'm an enormous baseball fan, but I'm a Pirates fan, not an Orioles fan. And second, I think that for purposes of this briefing, I will regard that as a foreign policy question, not a domestic one.

Q It took place in Baltimore. It's domestic, Mr. Reed. Do you want to just evade the question?

MR. REED: Yes.

Q You do? (Laughter.)

Q Mr. Reed, any specific things you're looking for from the media participants, like any specific programs they're advancing? I understand that there might be a PSA.

MR. REED: That's a possibility; we'll see. I think that as the President has said before and as the Vice President said last night on Larry King and the First Lady has said in the past, the entertainment industry has enormous ability to send the right message or the wrong one, and I think we were all impressed by an op-ed piece that ran in The New York Times yesterday by Gary Ross, the Director of Pleasantville and some other movies in which he committed to from this day forward, making sure that every time he wrote or made a movie, that he was going to consider the long-term consequences of it. We'd like to see that kind of commitment from others in the industry, and there are undoubtedly a number of things that they can do on the positive side to spread antiviolence messages.

Q What segments of the entertainment industry? Will there be someone from the movies? Will there be someone from video games?

MR. REED: Well, shortly, you'll receive a list that is not the whole list of everyone who is coming, but the main ones that have confirmed so far. Every sector of the entertainment industry will be well represented. Jack Valenti will be there representing the Motion Picture Association, Hilary Rosen will be there; she's head of the Recording Industry Artists Association. Eddie Fritts, President of the National Association of Broadcasters, Decker Anstrom, President of the National Cable Television Association. Doug Lowenstein, who is President of the Interactive Digital Software Association, which is the leading video game group. Steve Case, CEO of America On Line. So all sectors of the industry will be there.

Q What was the decision to exclude elected officials from this?

MR. REED: We have not excluded elected officials. As far as members of Congress go, we asked the congressional leaders in both parties in both Houses to designate a representative and I don't have those names to release yet. We probably should have those firmed up by the end of the day.

Q I understand that the press is not going to be allowed into this meeting. If that is true and not even a pool, how exactly is the message from the meeting going to be gotten out?

MR. REED: Well, I suspect that the President will have something to say at the beginning of the meeting, and that several people will speak after the meeting. The meeting itself we wanted to have as a working session. We wanted to have a candid discussion about ideas for this campaign and it's more difficult to have that kind of discussion when it's live on C-SPAN.

Q Will there be an NRA representative on this list we're going to be handed? Were they invited?

MR. REED: This list does not include the representatives of the gun industry and gun owners. There will be representatives of the gun industry and gun owners and I hope that by the end of today or tomorrow I can give out those names, but I don't have them yet.

Q Has anybody refused to come? Has anybody told you that they won't show up?

MR. REED: As you would expect, given that we announced this last week and we're having it on Monday, some people have scheduling conflicts and won't be able to make it.

Q Like who?

MR. REED: Well, Edgar Bronfman, for example, is -- he and his whole company are launching a new theme park in Orlando on Monday which they've been planning for several months, so -- but we have a good list of folks, and --

Q Did you ask anybody like Jerry Levin or any editor or any other heads of major entertainment?

MR. REED: Bronfman is head of a major entertainment -- and as I said, there may very well be other names. I don't want to get into everybody's scheduling problems, but --

Q How about the First Lady? Will she be there, or will she be campaigning in New York with Air Force One being paid for by the taxpayers for her politicking, and what do you think of that as the Domestic Advisor? Should all the taxpayers have to be paying for Hillary's campaigning in New York, Mr. Reed?

MR. REED: Yes. The First Lady will be at the meeting on Monday, and on that subject, I should tell you that tomorrow here at the White House, the First Lady will be having an event, a Mother's Day event with victims of gun violence. Representative Karen McCarthy will be here as well as one of the parents of one of the slain students in --

Q What about the business of paying for the money? What about the money that's being paid for Air Force One? Do you believe that's right, Mr. Reed, as the Domestic Advisor, or not? Could you tell us?

Q Has she already been invited to participate --

Q You just going to ignore that question too, Mr. Reed?

MR. REED: Yes, I'm going to evade that one, too.

Q You're going to evade that one, too, oh, Mr. Reed.

MR. REED: Yes.

Q What about the NRA? Last time I checked, you had not invited them, but you invited American Shooters --

MR. REED: As I said --

Q -- groups that -- American Shooters, I think is the name of one. I'm not sure of the other, but I think there are gun lobbyists I never heard of. I mean, obviously NRA is the big player in town; why not invite them?

MR. REED: As I said, the gun industry and gun owners will be well represented and you'll see when I put out the names -- I'm just not putting out the names yet because I want to confirm with them that they're actually going to be here.

Q Well, then can you say whether he invited the NRA?

MR. REED: The -- you'll see when I put out the list that we have people with --

Q You'd like to evade this, too?

MR. REED: No.

Q Bruce, have you invited them? Yes or no, please?

Q Yes or no? Are you considering it?

MR. REED: As I said, we will have people there with ties to the NRA.

Q Charlton Heston's going to be there.

Q Does he have a letter?

MR. REED: I didn't say that.

Q You didn't say that?

MR. REED: Sorry.

Q Who will be there from the NRA?

MR. REED: I'll tell you when I put out the names.

Q Bruce, why shouldn't we see this as another White House bull session at a time of crisis? I mean, what will make something actually happen out of this, other than people sitting around and chatting?

MR. REED: Well, first off, the whole purpose of this is to start a campaign outside government to carry out practical solutions, to, as I said, spread the word on what works. If you look at the track record of both the campaign on teen pregnancy, which has played an important role as teen pregnancy has dropped considerably in recent years, as well as the Welfare to Work partnership, which has helped move 400,000 people from welfare to work.

We're not bringing people together to just talk about these issues; we want to put people to work in solving them.

Q It sounds like -- I mean, you say you want this to be outside of government, it sounds like you've invited a bunch of lobbyists. Why haven't you invited, you know, celebrities or role models that would touch teens instead of Jack Valenti, who I don't think has a lot of sway with teenage America?

MR. REED: Well, I think that we will have a lot of both real people here at this meeting and people who know what they're talking about, people who have influence in their particular walks of life, and our goal is not just a one-day event; this is the beginning of a long-term campaign.

Q How about Tipper Gore? Will she be there?

MR. REED: She'll be there, yes.

Q And will she be asked to resume her campaign against violent and filthy lyrics, or is that still on hold?

MR. REED: Tipper Gore was very successful in getting the music industry --

Q It stopped. Do you remember? She stopped. Just suddenly, she stopped.

MR. REED: She did not stop.

Q Oh, she's still doing it?

MR. REED: There is now in place, thanks to the leadership of Tipper Gore, a rating system for the recording industry that wasn't there before she raised this issue.

Q At a Capitol Hill hearing this week, this suggestion came up and I wanted to know what you thought of it. I think it was Bennett -- Bill Bennett said that he thinks that Hollywood, video games and other mass media purveyors, I guess, are trying to get kids hooked on violence the way cigarette companies -- they're marketing violence to kids to get them hooked on violence the way cigarette companies marketed to kids to get them hooked on nicotine. What do you think of that parallel or that analogy?

MR. REED: Well, I think that there is real cause for concern about the level of violence in movies and video games and other entertainment media, and it's well worth looking at how those media are marketed. I think that it's probably best to look at this industry's strengths and weaknesses on its own and not draw parallels to other industries.

Q I want to get back to the question of access. You had us inside the East Room all day for school safety, for child care. I mean, the list goes on and on, covering these sessions wall to wall -- where a lot of you would argue, I'm sure, concrete solutions or seminars, other programs, other administration initiatives came out; why can't we be inside for this one?

MR. REED: I suspect that you'll hear all about it, and that the stakeout afterwards will be relatively crowded. So I wouldn't worry too much about keeping secrets. It's sometimes easier to run a meeting when the TV lights aren't on.

Q Where did the idea to close the meeting come from? In other words, is that the White House or was that a condition under which these people --

MR. REED: Oh, no, no. No one who is coming knows one way or the other on that.

Q -- where you're going to have this meeting in the White House?

MR. REED: That was our decision.

Q Where within the White House are you going to have this meeting, and are you going to have one big table with all these people around it or different discussion groups? How are you going to organize this two and a half hours?

MR. REED: I believe it will be in the East Room at a U-shaped table.

Q Mr. Reed, is the shape of the table an issue?

MR. REED: Not as yet, thank you.

Q Down the road, do you see this nonprofit organization getting into an investigation of cause and effect? Because I think Valenti said on the Hill this week he wasn't too sure that there was a connection between depictions of violence and the behavior of young people.

MR. REED: Well, there may well be a call for further research in that area. I'm not sure that this particular organization would lead that research. The Campaign on Teen Pregnancy, for example, has done a lot of evaluating of existing studies and tried to make it easier for states and communities to tell what's working and what's not working without having to get a sociology degree to wade through all the stuff. So --

Q You stressed the nongovernmental aspects of this work up to now. Is the administration contemplating any legislative initiatives in the area of regulating the entertainment that's directed at young people?

MR. REED: Because of the First Amendment, it's a very difficult area in which to regulate. We have been -- we were successful in enacting legislation on the V-chip and this year, half the new televisions sold in America will contain the V-chip. We'd like to do a lot more work to inform parents about the V-chip, make sure that they know how it works and that they're taking advantage of it. And there is, of course, in conjunction with that now a voluntary rating system which every network except NBC takes part in.

We're happy to look at other legislative ideas. We don't have any in mind at the moment. The Communications Decency Act, which the President signed until law was struck down. So, it may be possible to enact and sustain some kind of legislation, but in the meantime, we'll want to challenge the industry to do its part.

Q Do you believe that --

Q -- report that called for a Surgeon General's report by Lieberman, and Valenti endorsed that as well, and also, some kind of national commission on violence?

MR. REED: I saw both those ideas. I haven't had a chance to talk to others about them.

Q Do you believe the Annapolis school that --

Q Bill Bennett, will he be a part of this? He's long been an advocate for tougher program standards and --

MR. REED: He's not going to be there on Monday. His wife actually has been involved, I believe, in the teen pregnancy campaign.

Q Was he invited?

MR. REED: No.

Q What's the timetable for starting this nonprofit -- you talking weeks, months, when are we going to see something coming out of this, and who do you have in mind?

MR. REED: Well, we'll need to select an executive director and put together a board and that can take some time. So, I can't give you a firm timetable. We'll do it as quickly as we can.

Q A school in Annapolis expelled a nine-year-old for drawing a picture of a gun. Do you think that was wise? And the other thing, having this behind closed doors, like the Hillary health plan -- that didn't lead to much. Why haven't you learned, and could you tell us how you feel about the Annapolis gun drawing ban?

MR. REED: I'm not sure which of those questions I want to evade, first. (Laughter.)

Q You'd like to evade both of those questions. Do you want to evade both of them?

MR. REED: Let me just say a word about expulsions. Because of legislation the President signed in 1994, we do have an expulsion policy in place nationwide. Kids who bring guns to school are required to be expelled, however it allows schools to make a waiver in circumstances where it's appropriate.

Q If it's a paper gun? You can make a waiver if it's a paper gun?

MR. REED: Yes, if it's a six-year-old who brought a gun and didn't know that he had a gun in his backpack. There's plenty of hypotheticals you can come up with.

Q How big of a budget do you think this foundation should have, and where is it going to get the money?

MR. REED: Both of these others raised money independently, and my guess -- it would be best to check with them to know exactly what their budget is -- each of them.

Q Beyond the formation of this nonprofit, is there anything else that you can say will firmly come out of the meeting? And secondly, what, if anything, do you know about these reports about some kind of violent activities at schools around the country on Monday?

MR. REED: On the second part of it, I saw the story in The Post this morning, which talked about rumors spreading on the Internet -- I'm not clear what they were related to. So, I don't have any firsthand knowledge of those, and there may be other things to emerge from Monday, we'll just have to see.

Q When the White House set up the Race Initiative, you did not give a seat at the table to the Affirmative Action -- the people who oppose the Affirmative Action. That may have been a mistake, because you didn't have a conservative voice and that board really didn't come up with much of anything. Do you see the same danger now that you're not giving a seat at the table to the NRA?

MR. REED: Well, I said that we'd have --

Q Yes, but you said --

MR. REED: That they would be represented at this meeting. So, no, I think -- not everybody at this table is necessarily going to agree with what we're saying. That's true for the entertainment industry. It may be true for the gun industry. We're not trying to just preach to the converted here.

Q On another subject --

Q Tomorrow's anti-gun event? Can we just follow up?

MR. REED: Sure

Q What time is that? And will that be open coverage?

MR. REED: I'm sure it's open. I think it's either outside or in 450, depending on the weather, and I don't have the time.

Q 1:45 p.m.

MR. REED: Is that right? And while I'm on the subject of guns, let me say one more thing. Yesterday, Senate Democrats introduced the President's gun legislation which he had announced a week ago here in the White House. And some of it may come to a vote next week. Senator Lott has pledged to bring up the juvenile justice bill, and it's entirely the Senate Democrats would bring up some of these gun issues.

Q As the President's Domestic Advisor, do you agree with UNICEF in their condemnation of school children across the country who are raising money to buy slaves and give them their release? Do you think that UNICEF is wrong or right to condemn that? And do you think that the Reverend Jesse Jackson should go to Sudan and apply his talents to help eradicate slavery? Or don't you care about slavery?

MR. REED: (Laughter.) I think I better read the newspaper more carefully. I've been missing some of these --

Q Well, it's been in The New York Times, The Boston Globe, Newsweek -- among others -- in the last two weeks. Half a page in The New York Times. Undoubtedly you must read that newspaper, don't you, Mr. Reed?

MR. REED: Anyone else have questions that I can evade?

Q You're going to evade that, too?

MR. REED: Yes, I have a perfect record.

Q Can I try again? Did you send the National Rifle Association an invitation to this event?

MR. REED: As I said, we will have --

Q Yes or no?

MR. REED: We don't send letters. We -- so --

Q You send couriers?

Q Have you called them?

MR. REED: We contacted a representative of the NRA who I believe will be coming to the event. So --

Q When are we going to -- will it be early this afternoon that we get the list of participants?

MR. REED: There's one that's being xeroxed by now that you should have had by now, I'm sorry.

Q On this legislation next week, there's a group of Democrats who have an eight-point plan. That's not the whole Democratic Senate. They're not all in favor of offering all those things. Daschell is working on a package of amendments that will probably include a gun things. Given that you had a number of proposals -- 10 or so -- what would you -- if you get three on the floor next week, which ones do you want to see?

MR. REED: Well, I think that we'd very much like to move quickly to close the loophole for gun shows -- to require background checks at gun shows. We'd like to raise the age of the youth handgun ban from 18 to 21. I think that background checks for explosives -- the juvenile Brady legislation to ban violent juveniles for buying a gun for life -- so

Q Did Hatch put that in?

MR. REED: Did he? Yes. So, you know -- we think that everything in our bill is important, so I don't mean to leave anything out. But we'd like to see all of these come up to a vote as soon as we can.

Q Representative Archer sent a letter to the White House this week asking for a meeting with President Clinton to talk about Social Security Reform. Has there been any response to that letter? Was it received cordially?

MR. REED: I don't know the answer to that question.

Q At the end of the day, how are you going to prevent all these initiatives from being perceived as big government?

MR. REED: Well, this one is definitely non-government, and I think that we've seen, in our campaign to reduce teen pregnancy, in our efforts to move people from welfare to work, that there's an enormous enthusiasm around the country in the private sector, at the community level, from citizens themselves to fulfill their responsibilities and at the same time, we have to keep doing ours. And we're not relying entirely on government, but we're not shying away from using government to reduce access to use guns, to doing more to keep kids safe at school, and so on.

Q May I ask how you can have these people with the differing views -- I'm sure you have a variety of views -- within two and a half hours when, for instance, a couple of days ago one Senate committee hearing on just a small part of these problems -- their hearing took about five hours. What is it you're trying to do --

MR. REED: Maybe it will run long.

Q No, I mean is it that what you're trying to do is convince people to back this future nonprofit, and sort of pitch them --

MR. REED: Not necessarily. The President, First Lady, Vice President -- they're very good at running these kinds of sessions, and we hope we can get some good ideas.

Q Thanks.

Q Will you have another meeting in New York for this, by any chance?

Q Thank you.

END

12:48 P.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 19, 1999

PRESS BRIEFING BY  
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION RICHARD RILEY  
AND DOMESTIC POLICY ADVISOR BRUCE REED

The Briefing Room

9:20 A.M. EDT

MR. TOIV: Good morning, everybody. As you can see, I am flanked by the Secretary of Education Dick Riley, and the President's Domestic Policy Advisor Bruce Reed, who are going to talk to you a little bit today about what the President just announced, which is the introduction later this week of our proposal for reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. And I will get out of their way.

SECRETARY RILEY: As the President indicated in his statement, that we are absolutely determined to pick up the pace of change to give all children in our nation a quality education that prepares them for this next century. We're not satisfied with the status quo. We're determined to make positive changes happen sooner rather than later.

Five years ago, in reauthorizing the ESEA, we set out to end what I called a tyranny of low expectations -- a deeply flawed assumption that giving children who are living in poverty, poor children, a second-class and in some cases a third-class education, and that that was acceptable in this country. And it's not. The administration has never been willing to accept a status quo that puts children in over-crowded classrooms, with unprepared teachers who are forced to teach from watered-down curriculum. No child should be left behind. No child should be allowed to drift through school unable to read. No child should have an unqualified teacher. And no child should have to go to a failing school.

The legislation that we're sending to Congress this week places a very strong emphasis on quality teachers and greater accountability. It captures the best of the many practices at the local and state level that are helping us to improve public education. This administration has been pro education from day one, and we're not about to back off now from our commitment to making sure every child in this country has a quality education.

We know how to make meaningful change happen. The last thing we need to be doing at this moment is to be listening to the sound bite experts who are already promising another round of silver bullet solutions and educational quick fixes. There's a strong emerging American consensus out there about how to improve education, and our proposed legislation reflects this developing and growing consensus.

We place a strong emphasis on raising academic standards, early childhood learning opportunities, reading, smaller classes, up-to-date training and support for teachers, getting technology into every single classroom, more after-school and summer school programs, proven prevention efforts to keep our schools safe.

We want real accountability for results, and we want much greater parent and community involvement to make our schools better. And we also have to be forward-looking and update our schools for this next era. And that's why we continue to place a strong emphasis on math and science, and a new emphasis on foreign language and reform of the American high school.

I see no reason, for example, why every single high school in America, including high poverty schools, should not be giving their students the opportunity to take advance placement courses. And we have to help our high schools do a much better job of connecting with all of their students in light of the recent tragedy in Littleton, Colorado.

Raising standards, improving the quality of America's teachers and giving them the support they need, schools which prepare children to pass and not to fail -- all of these things translate, then, into real accountability for results. A strong commitment of safe, disciplined, drug-free schools -- these are the core ideas that define this legislation.

I think we're moving in the right direction. And we look forward to working to improve the quality of education for all of our children. America's parents and the public deserve quality public schools in their respective communities, and this legislation is an important, forward-looking approach to helping us provide an education of excellence for all children.

Bruce?

Q What are you talking about when you refer to the quick fixes and silver bullets?

SECRETARY RILEY: You want me to respond to that?

MR. REED: Go ahead.

SECRETARY RILEY: If you look at this approach that we have, the reauthorization of this major piece of legislation, dealing with K through 12, and you see how we're moving forward where we are -- we start with standards being out there in all 50 states now. And Goals 2000 and the reauthorization in '94 really have moved all that forward.

Now we're trying to get standards down into the classroom in a very comprehensive, big way. That means good teachers. And it means accountability. And it means quality technology use, and so forth. These are major things.

Now, if you look at those that are out there talking about vouchers, talking about dollars following the students -- they've got two or three other names that they have and they kind of boil down to the same kind of approach. It takes us off -- it takes our eyes off of the prize. It takes us off of the concentration of making all schools better and having accountability. And it gets you off into some kind of magic way to improve education that I think is absolutely wrong.

Vouchers are a bad policy. It diverts money and attention from quality public schools. There's no question in my mind about that. It's a very complicated thing of dealing with then where the children go to school, no accountability for the public source in terms of private schools. You have all kinds of private schools jumping up --

Q Do you think it's to try to break down the public school system?

SECRETARY RILEY: Well, I would have to let those

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people who propose that say what their motivation is. I think it does, in its ultimate sense, cause dramatic damage to the public school system. And there's no need to get into that. It divides communities wide open. It diverts us from our attention to high standards for all children. We do the gateway for colleges and universities to where can Pell Grants be used and all. And we've had to close down, as I said before, over 700 higher institutions -- institutions of higher learning since I've been the Secretary because there were no schools at all.

Now, imagine if you do that out in K through 12 and you had every kind of entrepreneur in the world starting private schools, plus there are some constitutional questions. But I think it's just bad public policy. And the thing that bothers me it takes us off of where we know we can do wonderful help and great good. And that's what this bill is all about.

Why don't I let Bruce make his comments and then we'll get back into it.

MR. REED: Let me just add to what the Secretary said to Helen, which is the reason that this bill is so important is that this year we are going to have a great national debate about the role that the national government should play in education --

Q You mean the presidential campaign?

MR. REED: I think both in Congress and in the coming campaign. There are some in Congress who believe that the national government has no business investing more in education, and no business demanding accountability for results. We disagree. We think this is a national problem, that we should say once and for all that every kid ought to have a qualified teacher; no kid in America should be trapped in a failing school; and that we should fix our schools not one district at a time, not one state at a time, but everywhere.

And we welcome this national debate, we want to bring it on. And I might just add that the Congress is not off to a good start in this regard. This week the House Appropriations Committee released allocations for the various appropriations subcommittees, and the House allocations based on the budget resolution would require a 10 to 15 percent cut in the Labor-HHS bill which funds education. So we want to have a debate that moves education forward and it's off to the wrong start.

Q Could I ask about that comment? They say they're trying to live within the caps proposed in the budget deal a year and a half ago. Are you saying that perhaps the caps should be loosened, at least in this case, with regard to the Labor-HHS bill?

MR. REED: The President's budget which funds education is within the caps. We proposed ways to pay for these programs. And we'd like to see Congress follow suit.

Q Secretary Riley, you're talking about putting qualified teachers in the classrooms. Does this involve substitute teachers? Because in many cases, substitute teachers are in place in one classroom for weeks at a time.

SECRETARY RILEY: Well, I think we focus a lot here on teachers. As the President indicated and as I indicated, if we're talking about getting standards, definition of education and what it means, down into the classroom where it impacts the child, you've got to have quality teachers. And that's a major

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job this country has to do over the next 10 years.

And then, yes, you can have substitute teachers, you can have non-certified teachers -- a lot of them -- and that is a shortfall, and that is not a quality education, if you depend on teachers who are not certified, who are not certified to teach. So we want strong attention to that. We propose then to lump together Goals 2000, the Eisenhower Professional Development program, and Title VI of the old act that is kind of a block grant section -- to lump all those together and come out with a very strong teacher support system, proposed then that would give strong, different quality professional development for teachers, ways for teacher aids who are qualified to move toward teaching and getting certified, getting teachers who are not teaching in the field that they were educated out of the classroom and replace them with teachers who are. So we're proposing a major thrust in that direction.

Q So when are you hoping for a change in the substitute teacher policy?

SECRETARY RILEY: Well, we don't deal with the substitute teacher policy as such. That's kind of a local matter as to how they handle a teacher who is out temporarily or something like that. We deal more with teacher certification. And we have a period of years that we -- all schools would have to deal with that issue and teaching out of field.

MR. REED: Let me just add, April, the poorer schools have the hardest time getting good teachers and we attack that on a number of fronts. The President proposed and Congress adopted a plan to provide scholarships to people who go into teaching in low-income areas. This legislation requires that for Title I schools, all new teachers be fully certified or moving into certification within three years. And it strengthens the requirements for teacher's aides. In a lot of poor schools today it's aides that are doing much of the teaching, so this requires that teacher's aides need to have at least two years of college to be a teaching assistant. If they have less than that, they can't be a classroom instructor.

Q How much money is this and are you focusing on the colleges that turn out teachers? Is that where some of the money will go?

MR. REED: The teacher quality program in this bill was funded last year at \$1.2 billion -- the three programs that are consolidated into one program.

Q How much is it altogether?

MR. REED: Well, the overall federal effort in public education for public schools is about \$15 billion a year.

Q Also there is a sentence here, students will have to demonstrate that they meet standards at three transition points. Is this going to reignite the debate over standardized testing? Is the President going to repropose that, try to get something like that through?

MR. REED: Well, first off, the standards that students would have to meet would be set by the states and assessed by the states, and states and school districts need to use multiple measures, not just rely on a single test.

Q On another subject, Secretary Riley, you're saying

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crack down on background checks at gun shows. It opens a whole new loophole by allowing criminals to buy guns at pawn shops. So, as the President said earlier this morning, the Senate needs to finish work on the Juvenile Justice bill and bring both measures that Speaker Hastert endorsed yesterday to a vote in the Senate -- background checks for gun shows and raising the handgun age to 21.

Q To follow up on that, would he veto the bill if that measure was still in there? Wouldn't half a loaf be better than --

MR. REED: Look, I think that -- it's not going to come to that. We've seen an increasing amount of common sense in recent days, and we think that as time goes on, the congressional leadership will come around on more of these common sense issues.

Q Can I ask about the education bill again? You talk a lot about accountability measures, and specifically about social promotion and about cracking down on schools that don't work. But the 1994 bill had a lot of stuff on accountability, too, and I wonder if you can specifically tell me how this bill is different on accountability from 1994. What's new on it? And following that, how does the federal government plan to enforce these accountability measures? What's the mechanism for making them happen from Washington?

MR. REED: The measures the President highlighted today are all new -- a new emphasis on turning around failing schools or shutting them down, which has shown tremendous results in a handful of states that have tried it. In North Carolina, for example, they identified 15 failing schools. They actively intervened. Within a year, 14 of those schools were meeting the state standards. That's new. The teacher requirements we talked about for all teachers being certified or an alternative certification process that will lead to certification within three years is new. The requirement that secondary school teachers know the subject that they're teaching is new. Annual report cards on performance is new. Discipline codes is new.

Q What happens if a school doesn't send out the annual report card? Does Washington cut off their money? What happens if a school doesn't turn around in a few years? Do you shut them down?

MR. REED: The Secretary has a variety of sanctions at his disposal, ranging from a mild rebuke to a cut-off of money. But we think that states and school districts will do these things. We don't think any state is going to want to stand in the way of having qualified teachers or turning around failing schools, for example.

Q Secretary Riley, how do you think schools across the country are handling the aftermath of this Littleton, Colorado situation, where they're looking and getting kids who are threatening each other and expelling them and finding all these people who are problem people?

SECRETARY RILEY: Well, and, of course, there were hearings yesterday on that subject, and I thought it was very interesting -- several of the young children who testified mentioned, for example, small classes, and how important that is so young people will get to know each other and get to know their teacher. And I think all across the country this was such a riveting occurrence that it really just kind of overpowered everything else for even up to the present time. So you're

don't hold students back, but put more qualified teachers -- you have a lot of students graduating who are not speaking the King's and Queen's English and able to put one and one together. Why not hold them back, instead of blaming it on the teachers?

SECRETARY RILEY: Well, those children, students, who are finishing high school and are uneducated are a reflection of not having a standards process in place. If standards are handled properly, those kids when they were in kindergarten would have been judged to be having development trouble in terms of language; they would have had extra resources in kindergarten, in the 1st grade, and the 3rd grade, in the 4th grade, until they were able to handle that.

That's why -- and that's a story of the past. We want to change that. We want to make it where all young people are, as I say, taught in the school system to pass, from kindergarten on, and not just let them drift on through, and then in the 8th grade you realize they didn't learn how to read, and get into 12th grade and they don't understand algebra and so forth.

So the standard process -- I know I bore you to death talking about it -- it works. And if it's done properly, you will not have that situation exist. Now, when you have it out there, you then have to come in with extra resources, with after-school, which we're recommending a tripling of the funding; with summer schools, all those funds can also be used for summer school; small classes, very critical, especially in those early years -- that works. Research shows it works. All of those things then will make it where you won't have the situation develop where you have failing students.

Q Is there a federal mandate as to how many students must graduate from a state every year? Because I understand certain schools have some kind of ratio that they must put -- a certain amount must graduate each year.

MR. REED: No.

SECRETARY RILEY: You talking about colleges?

Q No, i'm talking about grade schools and high schools -- elementary and high school.

MR. REED: No.

Q Why do you think the Senate turned around on the safety locks on guns for children?

MR. REED: That's a common sense measure that we've been advocating here for some time. About a year and a half ago, the President brought gun manufacturers to the White House for a voluntary agreement on child safety locks. We've been pushing for this legislation for some time, and we're delighted that the Senate has come around. We think that there are a series of common sense steps that gun makers and hunters and sportsmen and ordinary Americans can agree on, and we'd like the Senate to make some more progress today.

Q Are you still pushing for the Lautenberg measure on gun show checks? Or would you accept the language that's in there now if the bill came down like that?

MR. REED: We're going to push very hard for the Lautenberg measure. The measure that the Senate passed last week on gun shows is riddled with loopholes. It doesn't effectively

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seeing different reactions all across the country. I think generally people are really trying their very best to deal with this very difficult situation.

And I am very pleased with our early warning guides which were prepared really after the previous incidences occurred. So, fortunately, we have that in place, and when this happened we immediately made those available. We've had to go to the reprinting of another 150,000. They are very well-done.

I can say that -- Janet Reno and I caused them to be done, but they involve the top school psychologists in America, the top teachers, counselors, law enforcement people, mental health people, and they really are very well-put-together ideas about how to prevent these kinds of incidences happening; then if they happen, what to do.

Q Did Littleton have one? Did the Littleton high school have one?

SECRETARY RILEY: They would have, yes. There were sent to all the schools. In fact, in Littleton, they had done a number of things that were the right things to do to prevent incidences. But, of course, again, this is kind of an aberration, but no question about the guidelines I think are very solid things for schools to do.

Large schools have a more difficult job -- large high schools -- than smaller schools, obviously, with the number of children being a lot greater. And that's another thing that we're talking about here, is reform of the high schools, school within school, ways to get more personal in the high school setting. So I think the American people are responding in a good way.

Thank you.

END

9:45 A.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 19, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
ON EDUCATION

The South Lawn

8:40 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. I'm delighted to be joined this morning by the Secretary of Education and by my Domestic Policy Advisor Bruce Reed to discuss the very important issue of our children's schools.

In my State of the Union address this year, I said that in order to meet our responsibility to create 21st century schools for all our children, we have to do a far, far better job of spending the \$15 billion in federal aid we send to our schools every year.

Building these kinds of schools has been a passion for me, for the Vice President, for Secretary Riley, for our entire administration. We have worked with members of Congress and education leaders, people in every state of the country, for over six years now. We have supported higher standards, better teachers, new technology, modern facilities, innovations like charter schools, character education, school uniforms.

But we know fundamentally that if we are going to change the way our schools work, we must change the way we invest federal aid in our schools.

On the way down here, just down the walk, the Secretary of Education said we have been working very hard to promote school standards around the country; now we have to get the standards actually into the schools. This week I am sending legislation to the Congress designed to do just that.

First, this legislation strengthens accountability for results. It says that states and school districts that choose to accept federal aid must take responsibility for turning around failing schools, or shutting them down. It says they must give parents report cards not just on their children, but on the children's schools. It says school districts must have strong discipline codes that are fair, consistent, and focused on prevention. It says they must make sure that teachers actually know the subjects they are teaching. It says they must stop the practice of social promotion, not by holding students back, but by making sure they have the support to meet the higher standards.

This legislation triples funding for after-school and summer school programs, provides for smaller classes, and requires other early interventions that lift students up.

Second, this legislation will put more highly-trained teachers in our nation's schools. It requires that all new teachers pass subject matter and skills tests, that all teachers be given the support they need to improve their knowledge and skills. It allows Congress to finish the job we started last fall of hiring 100,000 new, highly-trained teachers to reduce

class size in the early grades.

Finally, the legislation will help give all our children safe, healthy and disciplined learning environments. For the first time, it will require schools to adopt comprehensive school safety plans, use proven anti-drug and anti-violence prevention programs, intervene with troubled youth, establish security procedures for schools, and give parents an annual report of drug and violent incidents at their children's schools.

It also expands the character education efforts the Secretary of Education has done so much to advance, promotes alternative schools for disruptive students, and strengthens our policy of zero tolerance for guns by requiring that any student expelled for bringing a gun to school receive appropriate treatment and counseling before being allowed back into class.

As I said yesterday, we must do everything we can to keep guns out of the hands of our children. I want to commend the Senate for yesterday's overwhelming, bipartisan support for child safety locks. And I commend Speaker Hastert for his leadership in supporting background checks at gun shows, and for raising the age of handgun ownership to 21. I urge the Senate to keep working on the Justice bill, the Juvenile Justice bill, and to bring these common-sense measures to a vote.

Now, these education ideas are not Democratic or Republican, nor were they dreamed up in Washington. They were invented and proven successful in the laboratories of democracy at the school, city and state levels. They preserve and enhance the flexibility that states and districts need to run successful schools. If the federal government fails to act, the best of these practices will spread, but much more slowly. Just remember, it took 100 years for laws mandating universal education to spread from a few states to every state. That pace of change might have been all right in the 19th century; it won't do in the 21st century. We do not have the luxury of waiting and continuing to subsidize failure.

Nothing we can do will more surely unite our people and strengthen our nation than giving all of our children a high-quality education. We know what works -- our schools, our educators have shown us what works. It is time to put that as a condition of success in the investment of federal aid in every child in America. And I want to thank the Secretary of Education and Mr. Reed and everyone else who has worked on this program.

Thank you very much.

Q Mr. President, on the Balkans, can we ask you a question about the Balkans?

Q Do you like the peace proposal by Talbott -- that Talbott is taking to Moscow? What do you think of it?

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8:45 A.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

April 20, 1999

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

The Briefing Room

7:48 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: I want to begin by saying that Hillary and I are profoundly shocked and saddened by the tragedy today in Littleton, where two students opened fire on their classmates before apparently turning their guns on themselves.

I have spoken with Governor Bill Owens and County Commission Chair Patricia Holloway and expressed my profound concern for the people of Littleton. I have spoken to Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder, who, along with Attorney General Reno, is closely monitoring the situation. I've asked the Attorney General and the Secretary of Education to stand ready to assist local law enforcement, the schools, the families, the entire community during this time of crisis and sorrow.

A crisis response team is ready now to travel to Colorado, and I strongly believe that we should do whatever we can to get enough counselors to the families and the children as quickly as possible. I know the other communities that have been through this are also ready to do whatever they can to help.

I think that Patricia Holloway would not mind if I said that, amidst all the turmoil and grief that she and others are experiencing, she said to me just a moment ago that perhaps now America would wake up to the dimensions of this challenge -- if it could happen in a place like Littleton, and we could prevent anything like this from happening again. We pray that she is right.

We don't know yet all the hows or whys of this tragedy. Perhaps we may never fully understand it. St. Paul reminds us that we all see things in this life through a glass darkly, that we only partly understand what is happening. We do know that we must do more to reach out to our children and teach them to express their anger and to resolve their conflicts with words, not weapons. And we do know we have to do more to recognize the early warning signs that are sent before children act violently.

To the families who have lost their loved ones, to the parents who have lost their beloved children, to the wounded children and their families, to the people of the community of Littleton, I can only say tonight that the prayers of the American people are with you.

Thank you very much.

Q Mr. President, you tried to get this message out last fall. Is there anything additional that you can say or that the federal government can do to prevent things like this from happening?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think on this case it's very, very important that we have the facts, insofar as we can find

them out. You know, we had the conference here last fall; the Attorney General and the Secretary of Education prepared the handbook for all the schools that we asked to be widely used; and we do have, from bitter and sad experience, a great cadre of very good, effective grief counselors. My guess is that they will be needed in abundance there for the children.

I think after a little time has passed, we need to have a candid assessment about what more we can do to try to prevent these things from happening.

Q Mr. President, there seems to be an epidemic of these kinds of incidents now. There was Paducah, Kentucky; Jonesboro, Arkansas; Springfield, Oregon; and several others. Would you characterize this as an epidemic affecting the nation's school system?

THE PRESIDENT: I wouldn't want to use that word. What I would like to know is whether we can learn enough from this, which in its dimensions apparently is much greater than even the others were, and see what else we can do.

I had a very interesting conversation this afternoon with Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy, who, as all of you know, lost her own husband, and son sustained a wound as a result of a shooting incident on a commuter train. And that's what we talked about.

I think tonight we owe it to the people of Littleton and to the families involved in this tragedy to let them go through the grieving and deal -- and try to get the facts. And then the rest of us have a responsibility to do everything we can to make sure this doesn't make 1999 another year like last year, that we don't have another rash of this, we really can be more effective in preventing it.

And I wish I could say more tonight, but I don't think I can.

Q Mr. President, have you been told, sir, that the death toll is as high as the 25 figure that we've heard? And secondly, sir, every time one of these things happens we go through this chorus of hand-wringing and say, we've got to stop it from happening again. Is there anything specific and concrete that you'd like to see happening that hasn't happened yet?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't want to make -- there are, but what I would like to do is take a couple of days, because we don't know what the facts are here. And keep in mind, the community is an open wound right now, they have suffered as much as anyone can suffer. This is the largest group of fatalities, whatever the numbers are -- and I've heard various numbers, even as much as five minutes ago, right before I came out.

I'd like to answer that question, but I think anything I say tonight can only add to the pain of the people in Littleton and not serve to solve the problem. So I will answer that question when I have more facts and after we let a little time pass.

Q Mr. President, you said America should wake up. Wake up to what, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think there are a lot of kids out there who have access to weapons -- and apparently more than guns here -- and who build up these grievances in their own mind, and who are not being reached. And it's not just Littleton. We know that now. We've had lots and lots and lots of places. So it's -- I don't know how many of you have been there. I've

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actually been there, I know the community, and it's a wonderful place.

And I can't do better than what Patricia Holloway said, the Commission Chair -- if it can happen here, then surely people will recognize that they have to be alive to the possibility that it could occur in any community in America, and maybe that will help us to keep it from happening again.

But you know what we put out before. You know the efforts we've made. And I just think that tonight we need to focus on the families that lost their kids, on the children that are wounded, on the grieving of the community, give this thing a day or two for the facts to emerge. And then I'll try to have more to say to you.

Q On just the point, Mr. President, at the time you had that conference last year your administration said the students are still safer sitting in a classroom than they are walking down the street. Do you think Americans still think that's true? Do you think that's true?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, statistically, for all the whole 53 million kids in our schools, it's true. But from the facts we're hearing about what happened at this school and the possibility that explosives were out there, that hand grenades were available, that other things were there, it obviously wasn't true there. That was obviously the most dangerous place in Colorado today.

So I don't want to -- but that doesn't -- that shouldn't make people believe that every school is in danger. What it should make every community do is to study this handbook we put out and see what lessons can be learned here.

But again, tonight I think the American people ought to be thinking about those folks in Littleton. Tomorrow and in the days ahead we'll have more time to kind of gather ourselves and our determination and go back at this again.

Thank you.

END

7:58 P.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

April 21, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
DURING VOLUNTEER EVENT

Presidential Hall  
Old Executive Office Building

10:37 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. You know, Hillary and I look forward to this day so much every year. We want to thank you for what you do. We want to say to America we could not run the White House without you.

It happens that this day was scheduled on what has turned out to be a very sad day for America. And since, in my mind, you represent the best of American citizenship by what you do here every day as volunteers, I think it is important that we take a little time to ponder how we, as American citizens, should respond to what has occurred in Colorado.

First of all, I think it is important that we remember that we must come together and pray together, but also commit to act together. In Littleton, we saw and we continue to see horror and agony. We also see in that horror and agony the ties that bring us together as a national community -- the police officers rushing toward the sound of gunfire with bravery and professionalism, the students risking their own lives for their friends, the doctors and paramedics summoning all their skills under astonishing pressure, the parents and neighbors whose love and concern sustained their children through that last long night and who will be called upon to do much more in the days and weeks to come. We see, in a moment of agony, what is best in our community and in our country.

I have been particularly struck by the story of Mrs. Miller, the teacher who heard the gunfire and led dozens of students to safety in the choir room, who worked to keep them calm and quiet for hours while students removed ceiling tiles to let in more air. Doubtless we will learn more stories of quick thinking and grace under pressure as the details unfold. All of us are struggling to understand exactly what happened, and why. There is a deep desire to comfort the grieving and counsel the children. We must also focus on what we are going to do.

In Littleton, agents from the ATF and the FBI already are on the ground, providing tactical assistance to local authorities. Highly trained crisis workers are ready to help people cope with their loss. Fortunately, one of the most outstanding centers in the nation for this sort of work is in Denver.

Perhaps the most important thing all of us can do right now is to reach out to each other and to families and their young children. It is very important to explain to children, all over America, what has happened, and to reassure our own children that they are safe.

We also have to take this moment, once again, to hammer home to all the children of America that violence is wrong. And parents should take this moment to ask what else they can do to

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shield our children from violent images and experiences that warp young perceptions and obscure the consequences of violence -- to show our children, by the power of our own example, how to resolve conflicts peacefully.

And as we learned at the White House Conference on School Safety, and as is reflected in the handbook that the Secretary of Education and the Attorney General sent to all of our schools, we must all do more to recognize and look for the early warning signals that deeply troubled young people send often before they explode into violence. Surely more of them can be saved and more innocent victims and tragedies can be avoided.

In the days ahead we will do all we can to see what else can be done. For now, when the school has apparently just been cleared of bombs, and not all the children who were slain have been carried out, I think it is important on this day that we continue to offer the people of Colorado, the people of Littleton, the families involved, the sure knowledge that all of America cares for them and is praying for them.

So I ask you to now join me in a moment of silent prayer for those who lost their lives, for those who were wounded, for their families and those who love them and care for their community.

(A moment of silence is observed.)

Amen.

Now let me say that on this sad day I also want America to know that I came here to be with you because, in many of the sad moments of this administration and many of the greatest moments of our happiness and achievements for the American people, the ability of the White House to connect to them rests solely in the hands of people who are not paid employees of the federal government. Most Americans still have utterly no idea how many hundreds and hundreds of people volunteer at the White House, without which we could not do our jobs.

I got a note the other day from a person thanking me because the child of a friend of his had received a letter from the White House. And he said, I know you didn't sign that letter, but children expect to get their letters answered. That is just one example of things that would not happen, were it not for you. All over America, whenever someone comes up to me and tells me that they've had some contact from the White House that I know came because of a volunteer, I am once again grateful for what you do.

So I thank you for sharing this very profoundly sad moment with me, and with our country. But I also thank you for making it possible for us to do our work -- for the people of Littleton and the people of America. We are very, very grateful.

Thank you, and God bless you. (Applause.)

END

11:45 A.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

April 30, 1999

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

The Rose Garden

1:54 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Ladies and gentlemen, in the last several days, like most Americans, I have spent an enormous amount of time following the events in Colorado, talking to family and friends and others. And I have some thoughts on that that I want to share with you today.

Let me begin by saying we got some good news today on the economic front with the word that our economy expanded by 4.5 percent in the first quarter of this year. This news provides both more evidence that we should stick with our economic strategy and also is a worthwhile reminder that for all the challenges we face at home and abroad, we are, indeed, a fortunate people. We are strong enough to meet those challenges.

Over the past 10 days our whole nation has been united in grief with the people of Littleton, Colorado. We have also been profoundly moved by the courage, the common sense and the fundamental goodness of Littleton students, teachers, parents and public servants as they have spoken to us of the tragic events there. I have listened carefully to what they have said, and to other young people and parents who have been on the town hall meetings and those whom I have met personally.

We should recognize the simple truth that there is no simple, single answer. We should not be fighting about who takes the blame. Instead, we should all be looking for ways to take responsibility -- and we should be doing that together.

As we have united in grief, now we should unite in action. If we ask the right question: What can we do to give our children safe, whole childhoods, then there will be answers -- for parents and children, for teachers, communities and for those who influence the lives and the environment in which our children live, including those of us in government, religious leaders, the entertainment and Internet communities, those who produce explosives and weapons and those who use them lawfully.

I am inviting representatives of all these groups to come to the White House on May the 10th for a strategy session on children, violence and responsibility. The First Lady, the Vice President and Mrs. Gore, all of whom have worked for years to give our children the childhoods they deserve, will join me. I ask everyone to come to this meeting with ideas about how we can move forward together.

As Hillary said yesterday, we need nothing less than a grass-roots effort to protect our children and turn them away from violence. If citizens, parents and children alike, working together in their communities, can reduce teen pregnancy, reduce drunk driving, make seat belt use nearly universal, then working together we can protect our children.

I want to briefly set out a framework for how this challenge

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can best be addressed. The push and pull of modern life adds incalculable new burdens to the work of parents. We must strive to find ways to bring parents and children together more, to get parents more involved with their children's lives, to get negative influences and guns out of the lives of our children, and to give families the tools to meet these challenges.

First, we must help parents to pass on their values to their children -- in the face of a blizzard of popular communications that too often undermine those values. For young people who are particularly vulnerable and isolated, the violent video game they play can seem more real than conversations at home or lessons at school. We've been working to give parents stronger tools to protect their children and we must do more.

The V-chip will be included in half the new televisions sold this year. And together with the voluntary rating system adopted by broadcasters, it will give parents a new ability to screen the images their children see. Meanwhile, we've launched the most ambitious media plan ever to educate our children about the dangers of drugs.

The Vice President and Internet service providers have given parents the ability to block access to violent or otherwise inappropriate websites. The Vice President will continue to work with industry to find ways to help parents guide their children through cyberspace and we'll have more to say on that in the days ahead. We have worked to give our parents the tools to protect children from violence and to take guns out of the hands of children. The policy of zero tolerance for guns in schools led to 6,000 expulsions or suspensions in the last year alone.

This week, I proposed new measures to keep guns away from criminals and children, requiring background checks for buying guns at gun shows, as they are required at gun stores now, and background checks for the purchase of explosives, banning handgun ownership for people under 21 and restoring the Brady Bill's cooling off period, and closing the loopholes in the assault weapons law.

Even on these contentious issues, I believe we can reach across party lines and find common ground. I hope that sportsmen, gun manufacturers and lawmakers of all parties will see these steps for what they are -- common sense measures to promote the common good. We all love our children. I respect the rights of hunters and sportsmen. Let's bury the hatchet and build a future for our children together.

We must help parents fulfill their most important responsibilities. We all say we want parents to talk to their children more, but we all know that too many families have too little time even to have dinner together.

Because parents too often have too little time, we've passed the Family and Medical Leave Act and we're working to expand it. Because too many children leave school at 3:00 p.m. with nowhere to go and no adult to talk to, we're giving a quarter million kids access to after-school and summer school programs, and we're working to triple that number. Because many parents need help in recognizing the signs of illness in their children, we're working to expand access to mental health care for children of all ages. Next month, Mrs. Gore will host the first White House Conference on Mental Health. We are also working to expand counseling, mentoring and mental health services in our schools.

Most important of all, and perhaps most difficult, parents must be more active participants in their children's lives. It is not for us to pass judgment on how those two young men in

Colorado descended into darkness. We may never know what can be or even what could have been done. But this should be a wake-up call for all parents. We can never take our children for granted. We must never let the lines of communication, no matter how frayed, be broken altogether. Our children need us, even if they don't know it sometimes.

This terrible tragedy must not be an occasion for silence. This weekend, I ask all parents, if they have not already done so, to sit down and talk to their children about what happened at Littleton and what is happening in their schools and their lives.

If we are not careful, when our children move through their teen years and begin to create their own separate lives, the bustle and burden of our daily lives can cause families to drift too far apart, to ignore the still-strong needs of children for genuine concern and guidance and honest conversation. This is sometimes the hardest thing of all; but it is vital and lives depend on it.

Finally, I ask students to do more to help each other. Next week, if you have not already done so, I ask every student in America to look for someone at school who is not in your group. You know, there have always been different crowds in schools, and there always will be. This, too, is an inevitable part of growing up and finding your own path through life. But it should not be an occasion for disrespect or hostility in our schools. After all, our children are all on the same journey, even if they're trying to chart different paths. And this can be profoundly important in building a safer future.

The spirit of America can triumph in this troubling moment, and I am convinced it will. But we must build the energy and will and passion of our country, and the fundamental goodness of our people, into a grass-roots movement to turn away from violence, and to give all our children the safe and wholesome childhoods they richly deserve.

Thank you very much.

END

2:05 P.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 13, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
UPON DEPARTURE FOR FORT MCNAIR

South Lawn

10:30 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. On Monday we brought parents and students, religious leaders and educators, and representatives of the entertainment and gun industries to the White House to lay the groundwork for a national campaign to reduce youth violence.

We agreed that this was no time to point fingers or to pass the buck, but instead a time for everyone to take responsibility. Parents must take greater responsibility for their children's actions and get more involved in their children's lives. The entertainment industry must do its part.

Even now, in the aftermath of Littleton, there are some in the entertainment industry who say there is nothing they can or should do. But that is wrong. Hundreds of studies show that the aggregate impact of sustained exposure to violence over the media to children, principally on television, but also in the movies and now in video games, generally desensitize children to violence and its consequences, and therefore, make the more vulnerable children more violence-prone.

The entertainment community is helping parents to limit children's exposure to violence. It should also not market indiscriminate violence to children. If this is a job for all of society, the entertainment industry is very much a part of our society, and must do its part.

Perhaps the most courageous statement at the summit, however, came from representatives of the gun manufacturers. They vowed to be part of the solution, to work with us to pass sensible measures to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children.

One of the most important measures we agreed on was legislation to require background checks at gun shows. In the past five years, the Brady law has stopped more than a quarter million felons, fugitives and stalkers from buying handguns. But there's a loophole in the law: tens of thousands of guns are sold every year at gun shows without any background check at all.

Last night, a narrow majority of the Senate voted to preserve the dangerous gun show loophole. For the life of me, I can't figure out how they did it, or why they passed up this chance to save lives.

Just last November, over 70 percent of the voters in Florida -- not generally thought of as a liberal state -- voted to close the gun show loophole.

I ask the Senate to reconsider its decision. There is

MORE

simply no excuse for letting criminals get arms at gun shows they can't get at gun stores. Today, the Senate will have another chance to debate common-sense measures that most gun makers and sportsmen, and ordinary citizens, would welcome. The American people are watching this debate. They care very much about the result.

As we all saw Monday, the gun manufacturing industry is ready to make progress. The country is ready to make progress. The Congress should be ready to make progress. We can't expect parents, young people and the media to take responsibility if we in government aren't willing to do our part.

Thank you very much.

Q Mr. President, the Kosovo money bill -- is it getting so loaded down that you may have to veto it?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I believe that we're actually making progress. I got a report from Mr. Podesta this morning, and I think there is some effort to trim down the bill some and to get in position where I can sign it, and I hope it will be done quickly. We need the funds now, and we need the demonstration of support for the Kosovar refugees and for Macedonia and Albania now. It needs to be done as quickly as possible. And I'm, frankly, pretty encouraged this morning.

Q Do you think the American people understand the war, Mr. President? Support for the war seems to be declining, according to national polls.

THE PRESIDENT: I think they do understand it. I think they understand that it is overwhelmingly a humanitarian problem. I think they understand that there's a great difference between ethnic cleansing and mass slaughter and ethnic conflicts, which are so prevalent in other parts of the world. I think they understand that this is not something the United States is doing alone, but with the strong involvement and leadership of our European allies. And I believe they understand that we have an interest in seeing peace and freedom in Europe.

I think they are probably frustrated that it's not already over, but I said in the beginning we have to be prepared to pay the price of time. And the most important thing is that our children will understand it years from now if we stand against ethnic cleansing and we can turn the world against it, and they will not forgive us years from now if we do not.

Q Central American aid, Mr. President?

Q Are there offsets that you would accept?

Q Will Yeltsin be impeached? What happens if Yeltsin goes?

Q Central American aid --

THE PRESIDENT: That is there and I hope we get it.

END

10:38 A.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 20, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
UPON DEPARTURE FOR LITTLETON, COLORADO

The Rose Garden

10:45 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I have just met with my foreign policy team, but before I speak on the situation in Kosovo, I want to say a few words about school violence. As all of you know, in a few moments I am leaving for Littleton, Colorado where Hillary and I will meet with students and families from Columbine High School.

The news this morning of another school shooting, this one in Rockdale County in suburban Atlanta, is deeply troubling to me, as it is to all Americans.

We thank God that the injuries to the students do not seem to be life threatening. This incident, again, should underscore how profoundly important it is that all Americans come together in the face of these events to protect all of our children from violence.

There is debate going on in the Senate today relevant to that, and we must press ahead aggressively with the national campaign that we met about here a week ago Monday. We have got to do this.

The national security team has just briefed me on what has been accomplished to date in Kosovo by the air campaign, on the progress of our diplomacy with our allies in Russia, on the humanitarian situation on the ground. I want to speak about some of the recent developments, but first I want to say a word about one person who has been critical to our efforts in Kosovo, and indeed, to our entire national security program. I am pleased to announce that I have nominated General Hugh Shelton to a second term as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Over the last two years he has provided extraordinary leadership, unwavering dedication to our men and women in uniform, unstinting efforts on behalf of military readiness and modernization. Our nation is fortunate that this critical post will continue to be filled by someone of his experience, ability and character.

Now he also has, as all of you have noticed, great stature. We were joking in there a few moments ago, in a situation that is not really funny, that we had a vote about whether I should renominate General Shelton; and Secretary Cohen, Secretary Albright, Mr. Berger and I voted for it and he voted against it. But we overruled him and he's going to serve another term.

Let me say that our effort in Kosovo was strengthened by the vote in the House of Representatives to approve the supplemental funding we requested last month. It is absolutely imperative that the Senate follow suit without delay. The

MORE

measure will allow us to keep bringing aid to the refugees until they go home, to help the neighboring countries feeling the brunt of the crisis. Most important, it will give our military what it needs to see its mission through while maintaining the readiness of our forces around the world.

As all of you know, there are some things in the bill that I did not support, but it is terribly important that this aid be released as soon as possible to those other countries and to the refugees, and that we get the support for the military. I will sign the bill as soon as it gets here, and it is important that it be passed without delay.

Now, let me again say what we are doing. The refugees must go home with security and self government. The Serbian forces must leave Kosovo. An international security force with NATO at its core must deploy to protect people of every ethnicity and faith in Kosovo. On this, our country is speaking with a single voice, as we see by the strong bipartisan support for the measure.

From the beginning we have said that we believe that a peaceful resolution that meets these conditions would serve our interests, and we will continue to pursue one with our allies and with Russia. We will also continue our military campaign until the conditions are met. I believe the campaign is working. Each day we hear reports of desertions in the Serbian Army, dissension in Belgrade, unrest in Serbian communities. President Milosevic should know that he cannot change the fundamental terms that we have outlined, because they are simply what is required for the Kosovars to go home and live in peace.

The question is not whether ethnic cleansing will be reversed, but how much of the military will be destroyed because of his intransigence along the way? How much damage will be done to Serbia because of his delays? NATO is united in our determination to persist as long as it takes to achieve these goals.

Let me just make one other point about Kosovo. In the last few days we have seen more disturbing evidence of the atrocities committed against innocent Kosovars, including some of the first photographic proof of massacres of unarmed people. In trying to divert attention from these crimes Serbian forces are only committing more by placing civilians around military targets. It's like pushing someone in front of an on-coming train, and then trying to blame the train for running them over. We will not allow this cruel tactic to deceive or divert us from our goal. We need to stay focused and patient in pursuit of our simple objective, to defend the right of a people to exist on their land without being subject to mass expulsion and mass murder.

With continued support from Congress and the American people that is exactly what we intend to do. Thank you very much.

-END-

10:55 A.M. EDT