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Crime Bill Rally (Stone) - 7/28/94 [1]

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July 28, 1994, 9AM

PRESIDENT WILLIAM JEFFERSON

CLINTON

CRIME BILL RALLY

WASHINGTON, D.C.

JULY 28, 1994

[Acknowledgements: Senator Biden (possible)

and Chairman Brooks (possible); Attorney

General Janet Reno; Secretary Bentsen;

Director of National Drug Control Policy Lee

Brown;

Charles Moose, Chief of Police, Portland,

Oregon: a man who has given nearly twenty

years of service to his community, and is now

helping to lead them and the nation towards

community policing and other innovations that

will make a difference; and, leaders of federal

and state law enforcement groups representing

every area of the country.]

We are on the verge of a major victory for America. For too long the people who work hard and play by the rules in this country have fought crime with one hand tied behind their backs. Well, we are about to even up the odds.

After six long years, we are very close to enacting the toughest, largest, smartest federal attack on crime in history. We are united, and we are going to keep pushing until this Crime Bill is the law of the land.

I say to Chairman Biden and Chairman
Brooks and Members of Congress from both
Parties -- in the name of every child whose
playground has turned into a battleground, in
the name of every senior citizen who is afraid
to walk home alone, and in the name of every
citizen paralyzed by fear --

thank you for your hard work, and for moving
America forward into a safer future.

This victory for law-abiding Americans is
a fundamental part of the vision at the very
heart of my Administration: to put people first
again.

Everything we have done, we have done
so that our citizens can live the American
Dream again. Every step we take is about
making it possible -- at a time of rapid, often
remarkable change here and around the world
-- for our people to build good lives for
themselves and to pass the chance of better
lives onto their children.

In this great country, why has this been such a huge challenge? Because for more than a decade our leaders mismanaged our country, especially the economy. And the result was that our middle class worked harder for less, and as they did, our social fabric weakened. But the American people demanded better.

And for 18 months, I have devoted myself to an aggressive strategy for economic and social renewal.

That strategy started where it had to: with putting our economic house in order by coming to grips with the soaring deficit.

Barely a year ago, we enacted the biggest deficit cut in our history, including \$255 billion in specific spending cuts. Those tough decisions mean that our deficit is now going down for three years in a row for the first time since Harry Truman was President.

We had to cut. But we also had to invest so that every American could compete and win in the most competitive global economy ever. From the first day of preschool to the first day on the job to the last day before retirement and beyond, the American people should know this: whatever the world brings, they and their children will be prepared.

Fulfilling our strategy has meant change --
which isn't always popular in Washington.

But we have fought very hard, and it's
working. Our economy is coming back, with
3.8 million jobs produced since I took office.

Unemployment has fallen by more than 1.5
percent, and inflation is the lowest in two
decades.

We will do more, but this is an extraordinary start on our journey of renewal.

I am very proud of all this, and the American people should be proud of themselves. And, yet, none of this is enough to restore the American Dream.

Not if we don't defeat the crime and violence
that is pulling our people apart when we
should be coming together to face our
common challenges as one.

This nation cannot work if Americans
aren't safe in their homes, or if the schools
are too violent for our children to learn.

For six years we have debated crime endlessly and fought it fitfully. But today's progress changes that: it is not about debate and delay; it's about hope and progress. It is about putting 100,000 more police officers on our nation's streets, helping our communities to restore themselves. It will make Americans safer, and more productive.

Surely there is no more important piece in our strategy for national renewal.

No one has believed in community policing more than Chief Moose, who moved with his wife into a high risk neighborhood that he helped make safer.

Perhaps the most compelling argument for this law is that this is the crime bill that law enforcement demands -- and that's the way it should be.

But it hasn't been easy. No matter how tough and smart this bill is, everytime we turned around, someone said it couldn't or it shouldn't be done. So we had to stand up to all those skeptics and critics who were standing in the way of this bill.

We stood up to the NRA to win the historic ban on assault weapons. We have finally put the public interest ahead of the special interest, and when this bill becomes law 19 kinds of assault weapons will be banned for the first time.

We stood up to the view that prevailed for too long in my own Party about tougher punishment. Now, we will have capital punishment for anyone convicted of killing an officer. And violent repeat offenders will be sent to jail for life. As I promised, "three-strikes-and-you're-out" is going to be the law of the land.

We stood up to the forces in Washington opposed to cutting government to pay for our fight on crime. There's not a penny of new taxes in this bill. Instead, there will be fewer bureaucrats and more police.

And we stood up to the people who said that crime prevention programs are nothing but pork barrel politics. To anyone who says that, I say: tell it to our nation's police officers. They are the ones who wanted more support for programs like the Boys and Girls Clubs.

They are the ones who want safer schools --
as more than 100,000 kids carry guns to
school each day. And they are the ones who
say our kids need more mentors and the police
need more resources to help families in crisis.

Now, we are going to fight to make sure this bill becomes law in just a few short days.

But we have to remember that a law is only a tool, a piece of paper. For it to make a difference, every single American must make it work.

Every one of us must take responsibility for making this a stronger country. When we see a youth from a tough neighborhood who is desperate for that first job, we have to reach out with opportunity. When we know a police officer is trying to turn a gang member into a productive citizen, we have to do our part.

And when we see a child in trouble, we have to take personal responsibility for getting that child back to school and into the programs that can turn their life around.

We have stood up to all the forces that counted us out so many times on this Crime Bill, and we are about to win. Let that be a lesson to all those who have already written us off on our campaign to guarantee health care for all Americans. If we are really serious about renewing the American Dream, we must do this.

It's the only way we can open up new opportunities for all Americans to learn and work and realize their God-given potential.

How do I know we can reform health care? Because I've heard the naysayers before, and I know how far we have come to give America the Crime Bill it has needed for so long.

And because I know that, having come this far, we will not turn back on our vision of restoring the American Dream.

We have faced plenty of tough fights before. And we'll have plenty more ahead of us. But they are all worth it if they bring us to a day like this one.

We must face all our challenges with the same confidence and spirit of common purpose that has brought us here today. That is what has always built America. And that, I promise, is what will renew America for yet another generation.

