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The President of the United States
Rally to pass the crime bill
South Lawn
April 14, 1994

I want to thank all of you on the front lines of the fight against crime for coming to Washington today to press Congress to pass the crime bill now, without delay. We must give our people hope so we can take away their fear..

Behind me stand the heroes who stand behind us every day. They are the people who wake up every morning, put on a uniform and put their lives on the line to protect our safety. There are nearly 100 of them, and they're here from every state in America. They do good work, and that's why we want to put another 100,000 like them on our streets over the next five years.

You mayors and police chiefs and neighborhood leaders from our cities, big and small, carry burden everyday for all of us of bringing and holding our communities together. Last week, I was in communities like yours across the country. The Attorney General was too. And everywhere we went, people wanted answers to the crime problem.

When you go to Capitol Hill today, tell Congress that the people you and I work for have waited long enough.. The American people don't care about amendments that could slow the process down. They don't care about partisan bickering. You know that the American people don't see crime in terms of partisan advantages. They and you see the crying need for a national crime bill that gets the job done.

Tell Congress to give you the tools you need to do your job, to make our communities safe.

[Police] These officers behind me deserve our support. Congress must give us another 100,000 police on the streets. Tell them that once they pass the crime bill, I'm going to cut through the bureaucracy and cut the red tape so that 20,000 new officers are hired, trained, and ready to go within the first year.

When deployed right, more police out in our communities means less crime. In Los Angeles, after the earthquake in January, Mayor Riordan and Chief Williams responded to an explosive situation by increasing the police on the streets, and the crime rate went down significantly.

The Los Angeles Times said it "helped keep criminals off the streets in record numbers." The people of L.A. rose to the occasion because they saw the police in their communities and knew they were not alone. We can't let America's communities fight this problem alone any longer.

[Punishment] No matter how many more police we put into our communities, we'll be wasting their time and their lives if we don't get the small number of dangerous, violent,

repeat criminals off the streets. This crime bill tells them it's "three strikes and you are out."

A small number of violent criminals today are responsible for a large portion of the violent crimes. We know that. That's why the crime bill gives us tougher laws and includes funding for 30,000 more prison cells to make sure the dangerous criminals get put away.

And it will provide us with smarter, less costly punishments for the nonviolent criminals -- like boot camps for juvenile offenders and drug treatment so hard-core drug users don't bring their bad habits back into our neighborhoods.

[Prevention] On Monday at the Justice Department, I met a young man named Eddie Cutanda [kuh-TONN-duh], from Boston. In front of law enforcement officials from all over the country, he said, "I used to hate the police." (A very brave and honest young man.) He said, "I used to hate the police [because] I used to run the streets with my friends."

But he got away from gangs and drugs thanks to a community policing program, the kind of after school activity these officers belong to back home. The police in Boston probably saved this young man's life. And he knows it. When he introduced the two officers who had come down to Washington with him, he said they "were there for me like brothers."

We need more role models. We need to re-establish the basic things that connect people to one another, that let people belong to a community. We need more jobs, so young people will say yes to good paying work and no to the high cost of crime. The crime bill does all of these things because they work, and we need more of them.

I came to Washington to get this city to help people solve their problems at home. That's what the crime bill does. And look at how we pay for it. Not through new taxes. We're cutting the federal bureaucracy by over 250,000 positions, down to the lowest level since John F. Kennedy was President. We're going to get America's money out from behind the desks here in Washington and put it to work in your communities where it will do the most good.

[We're all on same side] Crime prevention works best when all of us realize we're on the same side. That's why every major law enforcement organization in America is here today.

Look at us all: The brave men and women of the rank and file. Police chiefs. Republican Mayors. Democratic Mayors. Civilians. Community Leaders. Business owners. Neighborhood people. We're all in this together.

For six, long years, America has waited for a comprehensive, national crime law because people in this town have been caught up in political debates that do nothing to improve the quality of life in your communities. All of the posturing behind the scenes helps nobody on the front lines.

And the American people don't care two bits about left or right. They want what works. More police. More punishment. More prevention. The bill we want is a balanced, bipartisan, comprehensive approach to crime.

Let's pass the crime bill so we can give our people hope and take away their fear.