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cc:

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**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
REMARKS FOR WHITE HOUSE SCHOOL SAFETY
THE EAST ROOM
October 15, 1998**

Acknowledgments:TK

I want to start by joining the First Lady and Vice President Gore in welcoming you to the White House. The interest in this conference has been remarkable, and I want to thank everyone who has helped to make it happen. As you just heard, thousands of people all over the country are joining us by satellite, and we are cybercasting this event to thousands more through our White House web page. I know the First Lady had a very interesting discussion this morning on the root causes of youth violence, and I am looking forward to hearing from all of you about what we must do to protect our children and make our schools safe.

This is a time of great prosperity and even greater promise for our nation, and for all of our people. We have the strongest economy in a generation ... the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years ... the lowest unemployment in 29 years ... the lowest crime rate in 25 years.

We should all be proud of the progress we are making -- and the future we are building. But when it comes to our children's safety, we cannot afford to rest.

Like all Americans, I was shocked and heartbroken to hear about the tragic school shootings in Paducah, Springfield, Jonesboro, Edinoro, and Pearl. Like all Americans, I am deeply disturbed by the sight of metal detectors in school doorways ... by reports of gangs roving not on city streets but in school hallways ... by the stark reality of schools so unsafe that in some communities, children are actually afraid to go to school.

Our children can't learn if the threat of violence hangs over their heads and closes their minds ... if teachers are more concerned with maintaining discipline than teaching ... if a

disruptive few can dominate an entire classroom. At a time when we are doing everything we can to strengthen our nation for the 21st Century, we cannot afford to let the threat of violence in our schools and our communities stand between our children and the education they need to make the most of their lives. We must take action to prevent youth violence before it happens.

For nearly six years, we have worked hard to make our schools places of learning and discipline, not places of disrespect and fear. We strengthened and expanded the Safe and Drug Free Schools program. We have supported policies that build order and respect, such as anti-truancy, curfews, and school uniforms. We have enforced Zero Tolerance for guns in our schools -- expelling more than 6,000 students who endangered their classmates, their teachers, and themselves by bringing weapons into the classroom. And my balanced budget more than quadruples our investment in afterschool programs to keep our children in school, off the streets, and out of danger.

But to really do something about school violence, we must understand the nature and magnitude of the problem. What drives young people to commit acts of violence? What could possibly cause a teenager to pick up a gun and open fire on his classmates? How many of our teachers spend more time maintaining order than teaching? Which of our nation's schools need the most help? Finally, and most importantly, what can we all do to prevent violence in our schools and communities and make them safe for our children?

Last December, I directed Education Secretary Riley and Attorney General Reno to prepare the first annual report on school safety in America that begins to answer these questions, and includes information for schools to develop anti-violence plans. I am pleased to announce that this report is now ready, and we are shipping it to every school district in the country.

This report confirms the good news: most of our schools are safe. But in too many schools, teachers will tell you that when once the chief discipline problems was cutting class, now it may be wearing gang colors or dealing drugs. In too many schools, students feel unsafe just walking down the hall. In too many of our schools, disrespect for authority and intolerance of other students is on the rise.

This is simply unacceptable. Our schools must be sanctuaries of safety and civility. Today, I want to talk about the steps I believe we must take to meet this challenge.

First, in schools with the biggest violence problems, security must be our top priority. We know what a difference community policing has made all over the country. Today, I am pleased to announce a new \$65 million initiative to help schools hire and train 2,000 new community police and school resource officers. Just as community police officers walk the beat, these officers will walk the hallways of our schools. They will work closely with principals, teachers, and parents to develop anti-violence and anti-drug plans based on individual schools' actual needs. Most important, they will get involved in students lives.

Community policing has helped make our streets safe -- it can help make our schools safe, too.

Second, we must help schools recognize the early warning signs of violence -- and to respond to violence when it does strike. Last September, we released an Early Warning Signs Guide to schools -- and it is already being used by schools all around the country. Today, I am pleased to announce that I will soon send to Congress my plan to create a \$12 million School Emergency Response to Violence, or Project SERV. This plan is based on what people in communities that have suffered violent tragedies in their schools tell us will work best. Just as FEMA responds to natural disasters, Project SERV will travel to where the trouble is, and help communities respond quickly to school violence -- from helping schools meet increased security needs to providing emergency and longer term mental health crisis counseling for students and faculty and their families.

Let me say here that I am very proud of the work Tipper Gore is doing to draw attention to the problem of mental illness. While children and teenagers with mental illness are no more likely to commit violent crimes, many young people who do strike out in violence are frequently troubled. But all too often, families do not seek treatment for their children -- or they seek it too late. Our administration has consistently increased funding for children's mental health. Today, I would like to ask all of you to join me and Tipper in committing ourselves to end the shame and stigma of mental illness -- and help all young people lead healthy, productive lives.

Third, we must do more to make sure that young people are safe, not only during school hours, but when they walk out the schoolhouse door. Today, I am pleased to announce two new steps to meet that challenge. Our new Safe Schools -- Safe Communities initiative will award \$25 million to help ten targeted communities develop community-wide plans to reduce youth violence and drug use in and out of school. It will promote afterschool programs, mentoring, and mental health services.

I am also pleased to announce that we are undertaking a major overhaul of the Safe and Drug Free Schools program. Our revamped program will ask more of schools -- but it will do more to make our schools safe, disciplined, and drug-free. Among other things, it will require schools to establish tough but fair discipline policies ... to put in place proven drug-prevention strategies ... and to issue yearly school safety report cards to give parents and the public a measure of the their progress.

These are the methods that have worked so well in cities like Boston, where no young person was killed in more than two years. If they can work in Boston, they can work all over the country.

Fourth, we must demand more from young people themselves. Given the facts, given the resources, and given the encouragement, we know that young people will do the right thing. This year, I was proud to launch an unprecedented \$2 billion media campaign that is reaching young people with the powerful message

that drugs are wrong, drugs are illegal, and drugs can kill you. Now we must reach them with another message: you have the responsibility -- and you have the power -- to prevent youth violence.

Today, I am pleased to announce that together with MTV, we are launching a new campaign to encourage young people to become mentors and help their peers resolve conflicts peacefully. This campaign, called "Fight for Your Rights: Take a Stand Against Youth Violence," will reach millions of young people and help make our schools and our communities safe.

Above all, we must do more to teach our young people tolerance and respect for one another. As the recent tragedy in Wyoming makes all too clear, violent crimes are often motivated by prejudice and hatred. I have directed the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights to step up its efforts to stop discrimination against students in our schools. I have also called on the Congress to pass federal hate crimes legislation that would strengthen and expand the ability of the Justice Department to prosecute hate crimes committed because of the victim's sexual orientation, gender, or disability. But laws can only do so much. Ultimately, we must all take responsibility. It is often said that children have to be taught to hate -- it is up to us to teach them to respect one another.

Before we begin our discussion, I want to thank all of you for the work you have done and will continue to do to help us build a stronger, safer America. And now, I will turn the conversation over to Jamonn Kent, the Superintendent from the Springfield, Oregon public schools.

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FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

White House Conference on School Safety: Causes and Prevention of Youth Violence

A Live National Satellite Broadcast From the White House—East Room

Presented by the
**Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
U.S. Department of Justice**

In association with the
**Safe and Drug Free Schools Program
U.S. Department of Education**

And the
**Juvenile Justice Telecommunications Assistance Project
Eastern Kentucky University—Training Resource Center**

October 5, 1998

Dear Friend of America's Children:

I am pleased that you and your organization are joining the nationwide effort to create safer environments for our children by participating in our White House Conference on School Safety -- Causes and Prevention of Youth Violence. The conference will take place on Thursday, October 15, 1998, and I hope that you will use this opportunity to engage your community in confronting this challenging problem and finding solutions.

While schools are still among the safest places for America's young people, we know that violent crime continues to plague a number of our schools. We also know that the problems children face in school often reflect the problems of their communities: drugs, gangs, and guns, on the street and even in their homes. Solving these problems will call for the best effort from each of us -- from schools and teachers, parents and families, law enforcement officials and religious and community organizations. The federal government must also be an active partner.

At the White House Conference on School Safety, we will listen to and learn from students themselves and from parents, teachers, law enforcement, and other experts about efforts to keep our children safe in their schools and communities. We will build on the existing body of knowledge about young people and aggressive or violent behavior. We will share best practices and explore new solutions, and we will highlight strategies to put these models into practice nationwide.

Local events like yours are being developed across the country to underscore the importance of schools, communities, and families working together to create safer learning environments for our young people. You will have the opportunity to link via satellite to my live address when I issue the first Annual Report on School Safety; to a roundtable discussion on school and youth violence with the Vice President, the First Lady, Mrs. Gore, and me; and to a roundtable discussion, led by the First Lady, highlighting successful initiatives for creating safer schools and communities.

When our children's safety is at stake, we must take action -- and we all must do our part. I thank you for participating in this important event and for making a positive contribution to the future of America's children.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

SITE FACILITATOR GUIDE

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Page 5: Marleen Wong

Ms. Wong has been an invited speaker on topics of school based crisis and disaster recovery, violence prevention and mental health intervention for childhood trauma for state, national, and international organizations, which have included:

The Consortium on Asian American Mental Health Training
 The Third Annual International Symposium, Kobe, Japan
 The Federal Bureau of Investigation, US Department of Justice
 Harvard School of Public Health, Satellite Training Program
 Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
 National Association of Social Workers
 Speaker, California State Conference
 Presenter, National Conference
 National Town Hall Meeting on School Safety, San Francisco, California
 Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
 Children's Mental Health Conference
 Police Officers Association of Los Angeles County
 Psychological Trauma Center, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center
 Springfield Public Schools, Keynote Address, Springfield, Oregon
 Asian Pacific American Education Conference
 Federal Emergency Management Agency
 Region IX Disaster Recovery Conference,
 Kauai, Hawaii
 US Department of Education, Safe and Drug Free Schools Conferences
 Washington, D.C.
 United Teachers of Los Angeles, Annual Leadership Conference

Recognition and Awards Include:

1993	Asian American Administrator, Los Angeles Unified School District
1994	The McCammond Award, Outstanding Social Worker, The Los Angeles Friends of Mental Health.
1995	American Association of University Women, Significant and Distinguished Contribution to the Status of Women
1996	LAUSD Board of Education, Resolution of Outstanding Achievement
1998	The Jules Levine Outstanding Field Work Program Award Amigos De La Humanidad, University of Southern California
1998	Southern California Psychiatric Society, Outstanding Individual Contribution to the Field of Mental Health