

Memos on Zero Tolerance

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

June 26, 1995

MEMORANDUM FOR ERSKINE BOWLES, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF

FROM: Jeremy Ben-Ami, DPC
Mike Schmidt, DPC

SUBJECT: Follow-up on the President's June 10 Radio Address on Zero Tolerance

We wanted to give you a brief update on our follow-up to the President's June 10 Radio Address calling on Congress to make Zero Tolerance "the law of the land."

Late last Tuesday, we got word that Senator Byrd was planning to offer an amendment to the National Highway Designation Act that would make passing Zero Tolerance laws a national requirement. On Wednesday morning, we sent Senator Byrd a letter of support (the letter is attached). The amendment passed the Senate by a vote of 64-34.

Our focus now is on getting a similar amendment added to the House bill. The House plans to begin consideration of the Highway Act in mid-July. We are working with DOT on a legislative strategy, and will consider options for ways to ensure that the President gets credit for this achievement.

cc: Carol Rasco
Harold Ickes
Pat Griffin
Marcia Hale
Don Baer
Bill Curry
Bruce Reed

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

June 21, 1995

The Honorable Robert Byrd
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Robert:

Drinking and driving by young people is one of the nation's most serious threats to public health and public safety. I am deeply concerned about this ongoing tragedy that kills thousands of young people every year. It's against the law for young people to drink. It should be against the law for young people to drink and drive.

As you know, earlier this month, I called on Congress to make Zero Tolerance the law of the land. I support your amendment to the National Highway System Designation Act, which would achieve this goal.

A decade ago, we decided as a nation that the minimum drinking age should be 21. In 1984, President Reagan signed bipartisan legislation to achieve this goal, and today all 50 states have enacted such laws. Our efforts are paying off -- drunk driving deaths among people under 21 have been cut in half since 1984.

But we must do more. Twenty-four states and the nation's capital have enacted Zero Tolerance laws that consider a driver under age 21 to be "driving while impaired" after just one full drink of alcohol. These laws work -- alcohol-related crashes involving teenage drivers are down as much as 10-20 percent in those states. If all states had such laws, hundreds more lives could be saved and thousands of injuries could be prevented.

I commend your efforts today, and I urge the Senate to pass your amendment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Bill Clinton".