

## **Commentary on HUD's Recent Gun Buy-Back Program**

**"I only have about \$28,000 to spend on this program, but I wish I had \$1 million."**

**—John Groves, head of safety and investigation for the  
Housing Authority of Louisville, Kentucky  
The Courier-Journal, January 31, 2000**

**"I just want to avoid accidents in the home. Too many kids are getting shot with  
weapons that in some cases their parents had forgotten they owned."**

**—Mayor Lucian Pawlak of New Britain, Connecticut  
Hartford Courant, November 30, 1999**

**"Gifts for Guns was very successful....we didn't do it again only  
because we ran out of funds."**

**—Judge Hector Liendo, Laredo, Texas  
Laredo Morning Times, February 10, 2000**

**"If (a gun) is there, let's get rid of it, no questions asked."**

**—Daniel Garcia, Manager, Alazan Apache Courts,  
San Antonio, Texas, Housing Authority  
San Antonio Express-News, March 1, 2000**

**"I can't predict the future, but you've got to believe that it will help...the purpose of it is  
to get it off the streets, no questions asked....If we can prevent a homicide from  
occurring, that's what we want to do. It affords the opportunity for turning these guns  
in...it keeps it out of the hands of some bad guy"**

**--Captain David Smiley, New Hanover County, North Carolina, Sheriff Department  
Wilmington Morning Star, February 23, 2000**

**"By getting the guns out of the home, it will not only prevent shootings, but also  
suicides and accidental shootings."**

**--Jay Cunningham, Head of the Albany, New York, Public Housing Authority  
—The Daily Gazette, February 14, 2000**

**"It's an added level of community safety...I don't see how it could not be a success.  
Even one less gun helps"**

**--Community Service Officer Stephen Dube, Plattsburgh, New York  
—The Plattsburgh Press-Republican, February 1, 2000**

**"The idea of getting excess guns off the streets is a good idea, sets an excellent example,  
and is something we are happy to be involved with."**

**—Kevin Cacace, President of Yonkers, New York, Chamber of Commerce  
The Journal News, February 10, 2000**

**"It is an initiative on our part to get rid of guns that may be of harm to somebody....  
If we are involved in the saving of even one life, it is well worth the money."**

**--Raymond B. Asselin, Executive Director of the  
Springfield, Massachusetts, Housing Authority.  
Springfield Union-News, February 14, 2000**

**"When you talk about public housing, we do have a lot of domestic violence situations  
and certainly weapons might be involved...If we are able to recover those weapons, we  
might be able to prevent someone from getting killed...And there's always the  
possibility of kids getting hold of weapons left unattended and killing themselves or  
hurting themselves or hurting someone else."**

**--Police Chief Pete Alvarez, Corpus Christi, Texas  
Corpus Christi Caller Times, February 9, 2000**

**"Our goal is to get as many guns off the streets of Roanoke as possible."**

**--Roanoke, Virginia, Police Chief Atlas "Joe" Gaskins  
The Roanoke Times, February 9, 2000**



## COMMENTS ON THE HUD GUN BUYBACK INITIATIVE

**Senator Paul Sarbanes of Maryland, Ranking Member of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee:** "HUD's Gun Buyback Violence Reduction Initiative is an investment in getting guns off the streets, out of public housing and protecting the lives of adults and children alike. It is a small price to pay for the improved health, safety and well-being of our citizens living in public housing and surrounding communities, instead of paying an even higher price for the medical treatment of the victims of gun crime, caring for children whose parents have been lost to gun violence, and funding the law enforcement efforts needed to investigate and prosecute violent criminals."

**Senator Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey, Ranking Member of the Senate Budget Committee and a Member of the VA-HUD Appropriations Subcommittee:** Guns in our inner cities are exacting an awful toll. Families are being torn apart, young lives are being stolen, and communities are living in a state of constant fear. HUD's gun buyback program is the sort of aggressive, innovative program that we need to help put a stop to gun violence. This HUD initiative fits well with the crime-fighting goals I envisioned when I wrote the Drug Elimination Grant legislation in 1988."

**Senator Barbara Boxer of California, Member of the Budget Committee:** "There are nearly 250 million guns in America today. That's almost one for every man, woman, and child in this country. And that's why many local law enforcement officials now consider getting guns off the streets their top priority in reducing crime. I am pleased that the Department of Housing and Urban Development is providing grants to establish local gun buyback programs across the country. This is not a cure for gun violence, but it is a start at helping to keep guns out of the wrong hands and helping local police make our streets safer."

**Congressman Patrick Kennedy of Rhode Island:** "On their own initiative, communities across the country have launched successful buyback programs to rid themselves of guns and to reduce the senseless violence in their daily lives. I commend HUD for learning from these successes and for helping other communities implement effective buyback programs."

**Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy of New York, whose husband was shot to death and whose son was badly wounded on the Long Island Rail Road:** "I commend Secretary Cuomo and the Department of Housing and Urban Development for implementing the Gun Buyback Violence Reduction Initiative. Each gun we buy back is one less gun on the street. What is vital about this program is that guns will be destroyed – not put back in the circle of violence."

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**Sarah Brady, Chair of Handgun Control, Inc.:** "We support every effort to reduce the number of guns on the streets of our communities. This program demonstrates that HUD understands that easily accessible guns are one of the biggest problems facing the residents of public housing across America. HUD is making an important national commitment to keeping guns out of the wrong hands, especially kids and criminals."

**Bob Chase, President of the National Education Association:** "There is no single answer to preventing gun violence and keeping our children safe. Voluntary gun buyback programs that provide a means to get some of the weapons off the streets and out of children's homes are a step toward providing our young people with a safe and healthy environment in which to grow and learn."

**Arinn Dixon, Associate Director of Policy for Violence Prevention, Physicians for Social Responsibility:** "Reducing the number of guns on the street is essential to curbing the epidemic of gun violence in the country. Each gun turned in to a buyback program is one that won't be used to commit a crime, attempt a suicide, or kill unintentionally – it's a gun that won't ever fall into the wrong hands."

**Joshua Horwitz, Executive Director of the Educational Fund to End Handgun Violence:** "Gun buybacks provide an excellent way for communities to draw attention to the problem of gun violence, which is fueled by the widespread, easy availability of firearms. Gun buybacks are also a catalyst for local communities and neighborhood organizations to work with law enforcement in a collaborative manner. These collaborations can lead to long-term reductions in gun violence."

**Dr. Mohammad N. Akhter, Executive Director of the American Public Health Association:** "Removing guns from our streets is long overdue; it's a big step toward reducing the level of violence in our communities. HUD is pioneering a new approach. In addition to improving housing opportunities for our citizens, the agency is now taking steps to ensure that both the homes and communities in which we live are safe."

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**Daniel P. Henson III, Commissioner of the Housing Authority of Baltimore City:**

"The anecdotal evidence from Baltimore shows that gun buybacks have been very helpful in reducing crime. There is no doubt that when the number of weapons in a community decreases, there is a corresponding reduction in the use of weapons to commit acts of violence. This is particularly true in domestic situations. However, in the past we have had limited funds to maximize the potential of gun buyback initiatives. I look forward to the opportunity to explore more fully the relationship between the availability of guns and gun violence."

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## **GUN BUYBACK PROGRAMS IN 1999**

Here are summaries, taken from news accounts, of some gun buyback programs around the country conducted this year.

### **CALIFORNIA**

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### **DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**WASHINGTON** – August 26 – Two recently concluded gun buyback programs in the District of Columbia have led to calls for a national buyback program. The first focused on public housing complexes in the city's sixth district and collected 602 guns. The second was a two-day citywide program that netted 2,306 firearms.

### **FLORIDA**

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### **GEORGIA**

**ATLANTA** – May 29 – The Southern Christian Leadership Conference is reviving its gun buyback program after a two-year hiatus. Since the buybacks began in 1993, the SCLC has spent \$480,000 to purchase 10,000 guns. Some people refused money, saying they just wanted to get the guns off the street or out of their homes.

### **INDIANA**

**SOUTH BEND** – August 8 – "People do kill people," concluded an editorial in The South Bend Tribune. "But guns, with an efficiency that robs victims of any chance of self-preservation, give remorseless or demented people the power to terrorize society. Thanks to the St. Joseph Regional Health Center's gun buyback" – which collected 177 weapons – "there is a little less of that power on the streets of South Bend."

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**NEW YORK**

**BROOKLYN** – June – District Attorney Charles J. Hynes has launched a guns-for-cash program called "Turn it In for a Benjamin," referring to Benjamin Franklin, whose portrait appears on the \$100 bill. After quickly collecting more than 650 guns, the program was expanded citywide. "659 guns off the street reduces the opportunity for a lot of death and injury," said Hynes.

**OHIO**

**DAYTON** – June 1 – The parents of a student gunned down at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado in April shook the hands of Dayton residents standing in line to sell guns back to the police. Police collected about 150 guns in four hours. "If we can keep getting these kinds of crowds, we just might be able to make a change," said the father, Michael Shoels.

**RHODE ISLAND**

**NORTH PROVIDENCE** – August 1 – Just one day after the first murder in North Providence in five years, the town's first gun buyback netted 105 guns, purchased at \$25 each.

**WISCONSIN**

**KENOSHA** – May 11 – Some 174 firearms were surrendered to Kenosha law enforcement officials in return for gift certificates and cash, the most successful buyback in the City's history.

**RACINE** – June 13 – The Racine Interfaith Coalition collected 107 guns in return for \$50 and \$100 gift certificates at a local mall. Seven of the weapons collected were illegal. Last December, the Coalition bought back 132 guns.

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## HUD'S GUN BUYBACK INITIATIVE

### The Problem

- People living in public housing are over *twice as likely* to suffer from firearm-related victimization as the general population;
- There was an average of nearly *one gun-related homicide per day* in 66 of the nation's largest public housing authorities in 1998;
- Public housing authorities have spent well over \$4 billion in HUD funds on crime reduction and prevention efforts in the last decade.

### The Program

- In September, President Clinton announced HUD's \$15 million Gun Buyback Violence Reduction Initiative, to encourage public housing authorities to partner with local law enforcement agencies to take unwanted guns off the streets;
- About 80 public housing authorities – including Flint, MI and Memphis, TN – have already committed to conducting gun buybacks with local law enforcement;
- The program allows local PHAs to use the resources HUD has allocated them to do buybacks *as they choose* – buybacks are *controlled by local* authorities and reflect *local priorities* in fighting violent crime.

### HUD's Authority

- HUD has clear authority under the Public and Assisted Housing Drug Elimination Act:
  - Since amendments in 1998, the Secretary has had authority to make grants "for use in eliminating drug-related *and violent crime*," 42 U.S.C. §11901(a);
  - Act specifies that grants may be used for "programs designed to reduce use of drugs in and around" public or assisted housing "including drug-abuse prevention, intervention, referral, and treatment programs." 42 U.S.C. §11903(a)(6);
  - The relationship between the presence of guns and the problem of drug abuse is clear; reducing that presence is an appropriate means to reduce drug use.
- HUD followed the normal clearance process in promulgating buyback program – including careful review by program staff and by HUD's Office of General Counsel.
- HUD's Inspector General has long used the same source of funding to fight violent crime in public housing; the IG conducted a major buyback in Washington, D.C., without complaint.

### HUD Has Clear Authority to Conduct Gun Buybacks

- HUD's Gun Buyback Violence Reduction Initiative is clearly authorized under the Public and Assisted Housing Drug Elimination Act of 1990, as HUD's Office of General Counsel has confirmed.
- Since Fiscal Year 1996, each VA/HUD/Independent Agencies Appropriations Act has expressed the plain understanding that Public Housing Drug Elimination Program grants are "for use in *eliminating crime* in public housing projects." (emphasis added)
- In the Public and Assisted Housing Drug Elimination Act, Congress made the following findings, among others:
  - "the Federal Government has a duty to provide public and other federally assisted low-income housing that is decent, *safe*, and free from illegal drugs;"
  - "public and other federally assisted low-income housing in many areas suffers from rampant drug-related or *violent crime*;"
  - "the increase in drug-related and *violent crime* not only leads to murders, muggings, and other forms of violence against tenants, but also to a deterioration of the physical environment that requires substantial government expenditures;"
  - "the Federal Government should provide support for effective safety and security measures to combat drug-related and *violent crime* . . . ;" and
  - "closer cooperation should be encouraged between public and assisted housing managers, local law enforcement agencies, and residents in developing and implementing *anti-crime* programs." 42 U.S.C. §11901 (emphases added).
- The Act grants the Secretary of HUD general authority to make grants "for use in eliminating drug-related and violent crime." 42 U.S.C. §11902(a).
- The Act specifies that grants may be used for "programs designed to reduce use of drugs in and around public or other federally assisted low-income housing projects, including drug-abuse prevention, intervention, referral, and treatment programs." 42 U.S.C. §11903(a)(6). The relationship between gun possession and drug use is clear, and reducing the presence of guns in the community is an appropriate means to reduce drug use.
- "The fact is," Senator Jesse Helms has pointed out, "firearms are tools of the trade of most drug traffickers. Weapons clearly facilitate the criminal transactions and embolden violent thugs to commit their crimes." Senator Jesse Helms, 142 Cong. Rec. S1970-02 (1996).
- The Act also specifies that grants may be used for the "reimbursement of local law enforcement agencies for additional security and protective services," 42 U.S.C.

§11903(a)(2), and the reduction by local law enforcement of the supply of guns in a community increases security.

- With respect to the specific use of FY1999 Technical Assistance funding, the FY1999 VA/HUD/Independent Agencies Appropriations Act provided that the set-aside "shall be used for *grants*, technical assistance, contracts and *other assistance*," Pub. L. 105-276 (Oct. 21, 1998) (emphasis added). HUD's Office of General Counsel has concluded that the use of part of the set-aside for purposes similar to the formula grants is "entirely within the statutorily permissible range."
- Gun buybacks are no different from a range of efforts undertaken through PHDEP to tackle the problem of gun violence, and any interpretation of the Act that prevents HUD from conducting buy-backs would significantly restrict the Department's ability to support crime prevention efforts. Some recent examples of PHDEP grants that target gun crime include: a partnership between the Housing Authority of Frederick, MD and the Frederick Police Department on a "Gun Stoppers" program, which provides rewards for reporting illegal gun use, a comprehensive effort by the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles to prevent violence and violent crime, and the work of the Alliance of Concerned Men, negotiating a truce between warring gangs in a public housing community in Washington, D.C., that put an end to a reign of gun violence. Gun buybacks are just another facet of this comprehensive approach to reducing violent crime and gun violence in our public housing communities.
- HUD's Operation Safe Home, which is funded through a set-aside within the Drug Elimination Program, has long tackled guns and violent crime. Indeed, the Office of the Inspector General, which runs the program, tracks weapons seizures as a key measure of the program's impact and has funded a buyback program in the District of Columbia.

## Tools of the Trade

*Guns are widely recognized as basic tools of the trade for drug dealers. Guns are used to protect drug stashes from other dealers and the police and traded for drugs. The presence of guns in crack houses or cars is a threat to law enforcement officers conducting searches or arrests for drug offenses, and a menace to children sharing a roof with drug dealers.*

**"The fact is, Mr. President, that firearms are tools of the trade of most drug traffickers. Weapons clearly facilitate the criminal transactions and embolden violent thugs to commit their crimes." Senator Jesse Helms, 142 Cong. Rec. S1970-02 (1996).**

**"It is widely acknowledged that guns are 'tools of the trade' in the drug business." United States v. Turner, 93 F.3d 276, 289 (7th Cir. 1996):**

**"There is a recognized connection between firearms possession and drugs." United States v. Fisher, 97 F.3d 1449, 1996 WL 558366, at \*5 (4th Cir. 1996).**

"In the drug business, guns are tools of the trade." United States v. Westbrook, 119 F.3d 1176, 1193 (5th Cir. 1997).

"Recognizing that for drug dealers, firearms are 'tools of the trade,' this Court has explained that possession of a gun is 'highly probative in proving criminal intent.'" United States v. Thomas, 120 F.3d 564, 570 (5th Cir. 1997).

“[I]t is not unreasonable to recognize that weapons have become ‘tools of the trade’ in illegal narcotics operations.” United States v. Nelson, 6 F.3d 1049, 1056 (4th Cir. 1993).

"Drug traffickers typically possess weapons to guard their drugs and money." United States v. Blackstone, 56 F.3d 1143, 1145 (9th Cir. 1995).

“[D]rug dealers commonly keep firearms on their premises as tools of the trade.” United States v. Becerra, 97 F.3d 669, 671 (2d Cir. 1996).

"Experience on the trial and appellate benches has taught that substantial dealers in narcotics keep firearms on their premises as tools of the trade almost to the same extent as they keep scales, glassine bags, cutting equipment and other narcotics equipment." United States v. Wiener, 534 F.2d 15, 18 (2d Cir. 1976).

"[T]he connection between illegal drug operations and guns in our society is a tight one." United States v. Grojins, 163 F.3d 795, 799 (4th Cir. 1998).

“[I]n the drug culture, ‘firearms are the tools of the trade.’” Rosario v. United States, 164 F.3d 729, 735 (2d Cir. 1998).

“Drug traffickers may carry weapons to protect their merchandise, their cash receipts, and to intimidate prospective purchasers.” United States v. Nicholson, 983 F.2d 983, 990 (10th Cir. 1993).



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**Public Housing Authorities Conducting Gun Buybacks**

Watervliet HA -- Watervliet, NY  
HA of Savannah -- Savannah, GA  
HA of City of Hammond -- Hammond, IN  
HA of City of Flagstaff -- Flagstaff, AZ  
Rockford HA -- Rockford, IL  
Lexington-Fayette HA -- Lexington, KY  
San Francisco HA -- San Francisco, CA  
HA of High Point -- High Point, NC  
Knoxville Community Development Corporation -- Knoxville, TN  
Metro Dade Housing Agency -- Miami, FL  
HA of Princeton -- Princeton, KY  
Inkster Housing Commission -- Inkster, MI  
Springfield HA -- Springfield, MA  
HA of City of Wilmington, NC -- Wilmington, NC  
HA of Union City -- Union City, NJ  
HA City of Bayonne -- Bayonne, NJ  
Plattsburgh HA -- Plattsburgh, NY  
Lucas Metropolitan HA -- Toledo, OH  
Patterson HA -- Paterson, NJ  
HA of Columbia -- Columbia, KY  
Tampa HA -- Tampa, FL  
Corpus Christi HA -- Corpus Christi, TX  
Newark HA -- Newark, NJ  
HA of City of Gary, Indiana -- Gary, IN  
HA of Provo -- Provo, UT  
HA of Columbus, Georgia -- Columbus, GA  
The New Britain HA -- New Britain, CT  
Albany HA -- Albany, NY  
HA of the City of Millville -- Millville, NJ  
Randolph County HA -- Chester, IL  
HA of the City of Foley -- Foley, AL  
Amsterdam HA -- Amsterdam, NY  
HA of the City of Fort Mill -- Fort Mill, SC  
HA of the City of Hannibal -- Hannibal, MO  
Stark Metropolitan HA -- Canton, OH  
Easton HA -- Easton, PA  
HA of the County of Marin -- San Rafael, CA  
Saginaw Housing Commission -- Saginaw, MI  
Hawaii Housing & Community Development Corporation -- Honolulu, HI  
Memphis HA -- Memphis, TN  
HA City of San Antonio -- San Antonio, TX  
Roanoke Redevelopment HA -- Roanoke, VA  
Schenectady Municipal HA -- Schenectady, NY

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Kansas City, Kansas HA -- Kansas City, KS  
 HA of the City of Stamford -- Stamford, CT  
 Woonsocket HA -- Woonsocket, RI  
 HA of East Orange -- East Orange, NJ  
 HA of the City of El Paso -- El Paso, TX  
 HA of Louisville -- Louisville, KY  
 HA of the City of Monahans -- Monahans, TX  
 HA of the City of Orange -- Orange, NJ  
 Prichard HA -- Prichard, AL  
 HA of the City of Meriden -- Meriden, CT  
 The Municipal HA City of Yonkers -- Yonkers, NY  
 Malden HA -- Malden, MA  
 HA of Baltimore City -- Baltimore, MD  
 HA of Worcester -- Worcester, MA  
 HA of City of Las Cruces -- Las Cruces, NM  
 HA of the City of Augusta -- Augusta, GA  
 HA of the City of Camden -- Camden, AR  
 HA of the City of Laredo -- Laredo, TX  
 HA of the City of Norwalk -- S. Norwalk, CT  
 HA of the City of Pawtucket -- Pawtucket, RI  
 HA of the City of Annapolis -- Annapolis, MD  
 HA of the City of Rome -- Rome, GA  
 Flint Housing Commission -- Flint, MI  
 HA of the City of Durham -- Durham, NC  
 City of Detroit Housing Department -- Detroit, MI  
 HA of the City of Cordele -- Cordele, GA  
 River Rouge Housing Commission -- River Rouge, MI  
 HA City of Houston -- Houston, TX  
 HA City of Atlanta -- Atlanta, GA  
 HA of Hoboken -- Hoboken, NJ  
 Catskill HA -- Catskill, NY  
 Beaufort HA -- Beaufort, SC

## Buy-Back Program Said to Reduce Deaths by Gunshots

The following is from the 10/22/98 Join Together news service: (Access them by clicking on the "national news" link.)

A new study says that a decline in gun-related deaths in Pittsburgh, PA, may be linked to the city's gun buy-back program, Reuter's reported Oct.21.

The Pittsburgh Goods for Guns Antiviolence Coalition has collected more than 4,000 guns since its launch in 1994. At the same time, fatal firearms injuries in the city fell from 155 to 100 in 1996, and non-fatal gun injuries fell from 576 to 330.

The study presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Pediatrics suggested the buy-back program coupled with gun safety classes, information, and trigger locks distributed to residents, deserved credit for the decline. "These statistics indicate how a community can make an impact on a problem," said Dr. Matthew Masiello, a researcher at Memorial Medical Center in Johnston, Pa.

Dave Smith, President, TAGV/Houston said, "We participated in a small scale "Goods for Guns" program under the leadership of Council member Ray Driscoll in Houston and believe it had positive and beneficial results. It was especially gratifying to see young mothers bring small handguns to be destroyed. These guns in the home or in cars are a great danger to children. "Guns for Goods" programs are very valuable awareness and public education programs and occasions. The actual number of guns collected and destroyed in the course of the program is secondary to the broader effect of raising awareness to the dangers posed by firearms, and especially small handguns, to the community and especially to our children."

We encourage cities in Texas to follow the example of Pittsburgh and use "Goods for Guns" programs as part of efforts to reduce crime and violence."





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**LEESBURG** – July 31-- Beginning August 7, the City will pay \$25 for any gun handed over by Leesburg residents. "This program is to allow the citizens of our community the opportunity to get rid of any unwanted guns they may have in their home," said Police Corporal Pernell Mitchell. "A lot of accidents with kids and guns have happened inside the home."

### **GEORGIA**

**ATLANTA** – May 29 – The Southern Christian Leadership Conference is reviving its gun buyback program after a two-year hiatus. Since the buybacks began in 1993, the SCLC has spent \$480,000 to purchase 10,000 guns. Some people refused money, saying they just wanted to get the guns off the street or out of their homes.

### **INDIANA**

**SOUTH BEND** – August 8 – "People do kill people," concluded an editorial in The South Bend Tribune. "But guns, with an efficiency that robs victims of any chance of self-preservation, give remorseless or demented people the power to terrorize society. Thanks to the St. Joseph Regional Health Center's gun buyback" – which collected 177 weapons – "there is a little less of that power on the streets of South Bend."

-more-

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# HUD NEWS

DRAFT

Department of Housing and Urban Development – Andrew Cuomo, Secretary  
Office of Public Affairs, Washington, DC 20410

HUD No. 00-80  
(202) 708-0685  
List of grants on <http://www.hud.gov/news.html>

FOR RELEASE  
2:30 p.m. Tuesday  
April 18, 2000

## **BUYBACK AMERICA CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED IN 84 COMMUNITIES**

WASHINGTON – Housing and Urban Development Secretary Andrew Cuomo, on behalf of the Clinton Administration today launched BuyBack America – an unprecedented national campaign to buyback unwanted guns and raise awareness about gun safety. More than 80 communities have pledged to utilize HUD funds to purchase tens of thousands of unwanted firearms, reducing deaths and injuries caused by gun crimes, accidents and suicides. Cuomo also announced the availability of additional funds to enable gun buybacks to occur in hundreds of more communities in the coming year.

Tom Mauser – the father of slain Columbine student Daniel Mauser – joined Cuomo in today's announcement. Mauser, who has taken a leave of absence from his job and is working full-time to reduce gun violence with the group SAFE Colorado (Sane Alternatives to the Firearms Epidemic), said: "I welcome this buyback program because it is an effective way of eliminating guns from our streets. All of our institutions and leaders must do their part to help us reduce the terrible problem of gun violence in our country."

The Secretary was also joined by Annapolis, MD, Mayor Dean Johnson, whose city conducted their first-ever HUD-funded gun buyback last weekend, and the following Mayors whose cities will conduct their first HUD-funded buybacks as part of BuyBack America in the coming months: Sharpe James of Newark, NJ; Al Jurczynski of Schenectady, NY; Carol Marinovich of Kansas City, KS; Ruben Smith of Las Cruces, NM; and Bobby Peters of Columbus, OH.

Cuomo also announced a second round of buybacks that will enable even more local communities to buyback guns and get them off the streets. Housing Authorities will now be able to use their fiscal year 2000 – in addition to their 1999 funds – for this second round of buybacks. The buybacks are designed to reduce the toll of gun violence that claims an estimated 30,000 lives and wounds another 100,000 people each year in the United States.

Cuomo encouraged communities across the country that have not yet applied to take advantage of HUD funding, to join the nationwide BuyBack America campaign.

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"BuyBack America isn't just about buying back guns -- it's about buying back lives that would otherwise be lost to senseless gun violence," Cuomo said. "Tragically, gun violence today is a plague that is killing our fathers and mothers, our sisters and brothers, our wives and husbands, and even our children. Every gun we take off the street in a buyback is one less gun that can fall into the wrong hands and kill or wound an innocent victim. I encourage more communities to join us."

In September, President Clinton announced HUD's BuyBack initiative. Today's event illustrates the positive response to the President's call for action. The President is expected to have more to say about BuyBack America in the coming days.

Cuomo said people in communities participating in BuyBack America can get more information on local activities on a new section of HUD's website at [www.HUD.gov/BuyBackAmerica](http://www.HUD.gov/BuyBackAmerica)

Police departments and public housing authorities participating in BuyBack America will use funds from HUD's crime-fighting Drug Elimination Grant Program to buy back guns. HUD suggests a buyback price of \$50 for each gun. In addition, businesses are encouraged to donate gift certificates for food, toys, and other goods to individuals turning in guns. HUD is providing 43 cents in matching funds for every \$1 dollar in HUD Drug Elimination Grant funds which housing authorities sets aside for a gun buyback.

The basic premise of the gun buybacks is to give people the opportunity, for a limited period of time, to exchange their guns for something of value with no questions asked. To reduce the availability of guns, all guns purchased with HUD funds will be destroyed, unless it is determined that a gun was stolen or is needed for an ongoing law enforcement investigation. Stolen weapons will be returned to their lawful owners.

A recent study from RAND and the University of California-Los Angeles showed that more than 22 million children live in homes with firearms and in 43 percent of those homes, the guns are not locked up or fitted with trigger locks.

In addition to removing guns from the community, the buyback initiative is designed to foster cooperation between local communities and law enforcement agencies, as well as to educate people regarding gun safety and responsible gun ownership.

Other parts of the Clinton Administration's gun safety agenda include:

- HUD and the Department of the Treasury last month signed a historic agreement with Smith & Wesson to implement a "code of conduct" that will increase gun safety and improve retail distribution to keep guns out of the hands of children and criminals.
- A \$30 million Community Gun Safety and Violence Reduction Initiative that President Clinton proposed in his Fiscal Year 2001 Budget. The initiative, which would be administered by HUD, would fund computerized mapping of gun violence to help law enforcement agencies better protect the public, education and outreach programs to promote responsible safety measures by gun owners, and innovative community activities to reduce both gun crimes and accidents. If Congress approves funding for the initiative, local governments, law enforcement agencies, public housing authorities, community organizations, and other groups would be eligible to

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compete for HUD grants to support gun violence reduction activities in the communities the Department serves.

- A \$280 million national firearms enforcement initiative that is also part of the President's proposed budget. The initiative would hire 500 new ATF agents and inspectors to target gun criminals, hire more than 1,000 prosecutors at all levels of government, fund new gun tracing and ballistics testing systems to catch more gun criminals, fund local media campaigns to

The following individuals and organizations have expressed support for the BuyBack America initiative: Senator Paul Sarbanes of Maryland, Ranking Member of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee; Senator Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey, Ranking Member of the Senate Budget Committee and a Member of the VA-HUD Appropriations Subcommittee; Senator Barbara Boxer of California, Member of the Budget Committee; Congressman Patrick Kennedy of Rhode Island; Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy of New York, whose husband was murdered and whose son was badly wounded in a shooting on the Long Island Rail Road; Handgun Control, Inc.; the National Education Association; Physicians for Social Responsibility; the American Public Health Association; the Educational Fund to End Handgun Violence; the National Association of African Americans in Housing; and officials from the Housing Authority of Baltimore City and the Housing Authority of New Orleans.

##

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## HOUSING

*"Over the past few years, I have emphasized three basic ideas -- community, opportunity and responsibility -- that I believe are at the heart of a more dynamic and prosperous America. The priorities of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, from making sure that hardworking Americans realize the dream of homeownership, to addressing the tragedy of homelessness, are outstanding examples of how our government can empower people and institutions."*

President Bill Clinton  
October 1993

Recognizing that our homes are central to our well-being, President Clinton has worked to increase housing opportunities for all Americans, make homes and communities safer and more secure and reinvent HUD to meet America's housing and community development needs.

### A RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT:

**Transforming Public Housing:** The Clinton Administration is implementing the most far-reaching changes in public housing in decades -- demolishing the worst housing developments, cracking down on bad management, rewarding residents who work and cracking down on crime.

- **Replacing Worst Developments:** The Administration will tear down an unprecedented 30,000 units of the worst public housing and rebuild them with lower-density, townhome-style developments which can serve as anchors for neighborhood renewal. HUD has awarded \$1.44 billion in grants to spur economic development and change the shape of 85 public housing developments nationwide.
- **Improving Management:** The Clinton Administration is cracking down on bad management in public housing through takeovers of the most troubled public housing authorities in innovative partnerships with local and state officials.
- **Opportunity and Responsibility in Public Housing:** The Clinton Administration is changing admission rules and rent calculations to reward working families. Making public housing a springboard to further opportunities and a safe place to live through:
  - Campus for Learners initiative to transform public housing developments into living and learning centers through linkages with education, technology and job training;
  - Aggressive implementation of "One-Strike-and-You're-Out" policy that helps cities prevent drug dealers and violent offenders from terrorizing public housing residents in their homes by ensuring that people who engage in drugs and other criminal activity will face certain and swift eviction; and
  - Operation Safe Home under which federal law enforcement agencies are working with local police departments and public housing residents and managers to increase the arrest and conviction of violent and drug-related suspects so public housing developments can be safer places to live. This initiative has resulted in the arrest of thousands of criminals and confiscation of hundreds of assault weapons and \$3 million worth of drugs.

**Reinventing HUD:** The Clinton Administration has proposed a dramatic restructuring of HUD to respond more fully to local needs and local efforts to help people improve their own lives. The Administration's proposals would: consolidate HUD's 60 programs into three flexible performance-based funds, giving mayors and governors the flexibility to develop local demand and supply-side housing and community investment strategies; continue the transformation of public housing and provide portable vouchers to residents of the worst developments; and turn HUD into a "right-side-up, community-first" agency by relocating and empowering local personnel.

**Making the Dream of Homeownership a Reality for More Working and Middle Class Families:** The Clinton Administration has helped increase the nation's homeownership rate to its highest level in 15 years. Last year's increase in homeownership was the fastest annual increase in 30 years.

- **National Homeownership Strategy:** The Clinton Administration entered into an unprecedented partnership with more than 50 key public and private sector organizations to form a National Homeownership Strategy. Coupled with a stable economy and low interest rates, this initiative is aimed at helping 8 million more families become homeowners by the year 2000.
- **FHA Working for Homebuyers Better than Ever:** The Clinton Administration is revamping the Federal Housing Authority to better meet the needs of today's consumers -- through streamlining and consolidating services, automating functions using the latest technologies, introducing new innovative products and forging strategic alliances with private and public partners. FHA is also better serving low-income and minority homebuyers and providing home purchase loans for African-American and Hispanic-American homebuyers at more than twice the rate of conventional home purchase loan insurers -- and the rate is increasing.
- **Fair Housing:** The Clinton Administration is working to reduce barriers to homeownership caused by unlawful discrimination. To date, HUD has signed 70 "Best Practices" agreements with key lenders that are resulting in more fair lending practices and expanded opportunities for low-income and minority families.

**Producing More Affordable Housing for All Americans:** The Clinton Administration has provided the necessary flexibility and incentives to communities and businesses to encourage the development of more affordable housing and has improved assistance for those with acute housing needs.

- **Low-Income Housing Tax Credit:** President Clinton fulfilled his promise to permanently extend the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, spurring the private development of low-income housing and helping to produce more than 120,000 homes each year.
- **Innovative Public-Private Pension Fund Initiative:** The Clinton Administration launched an innovative public-private partnership initiative to encourage pension funds to invest in the production and rehabilitation of affordable multifamily housing. These partnerships will create 3,500 units of affordable housing for working families and the elderly.

- **Improved HOME Program:** Through a streamlined and more effective HOME program, the Administration, working with state and local governments, has significantly increased housing and rental assistance to families. In FY 1994 and 1995, the Administration provided approximately 127,000 families with housing assistance through the HOME program and over 19,000 families with HOME tenant-based rental assistance.
- **Greater Assistance to Poor Households with Acute Housing Needs:** The Administration continues to expand rental assistance for the record number of renter households who struggle to pay over 50% of their very low incomes toward rent and utilities. This assistance can be a critical tool for states and localities in helping families make the transition from welfare to work.
- **Home Equity Conversion Mortgage:** President Clinton strengthened and extended the Home Equity Conversion Mortgage, which allows seniors to use the equity in their homes to meet financial needs without having to sell their homes. The program has helped over 15,000 seniors -- a majority of whom are women living alone, and the numbers are increasing.
- **FHA Multifamily Portfolio Reengineering:** The Administration launched an effort to address long-standing problems in the FHA-insured subsidized multifamily portfolio that provides housing to nearly 800,000 low-income households. HUD proposes a comprehensive strategy to restructure debt, give tenants more housing choices and adjust rents to market, thereby reducing future subsidy costs and producing long-term savings.
- **Comprehensive and Coordinated Approach to Homeless Assistance:** The Clinton Administration has made homeless assistance a top priority, doubling its funding since FY 1993. In 1995, HUD awarded \$900 million to over 800 transitional and permanent housing programs nationwide to help homeless individuals and families move from the streets to self-sufficient lives and permanent housing. As a result of these efforts, HUD's homeless programs are serving 300,000 individuals, a fourteen-fold increase since 1993.

#### **THE CHALLENGES AHEAD:**

- Continue efforts to expand homeownership for all Americans.
- Continue working to build affordable homes and revitalize neighborhoods.
- Continue aggressive efforts to transform public housing.
- Expand Campus for Learners initiative to build education and technology linkages in public housing.
- Continue to expand opportunities for choice through tenant-based assistance for residents of public and assisted housing.



Deanne E. Benos  
04/18/2000 12:28:02 PM

Record Type      Record

To      Leanne A. Shimabukuro/OPD/EOP@EOP

cc

Subject:      Gun Buyback language.

**Creating a National Gun Buyback Program.** In 1999, President Clinton launched the largest gun buyback program in history. The program provided \$15 million for public housing authorities to partner with local law enforcement agencies to take an estimated 300,000 firearms out of circulation in communities nationwide. Cities across the nation – including New York, Chicago and Washington, D.C. – have conducted successful gun buybacks to curtail incidences of gun violence, including accidental shootings, homicides, suicides and domestic violence. Over 80 public housing authorities, including Elm, Michigan and Memphis, Tennessee, have already committed to conducting gun buybacks within the next year.

Leanne

Please Deliver Immediately  
HUD

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

|                         |                                             |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| TO:<br>Bruce Reed       | FROM:<br>Jacquie Lawing and Lisa MacSpadden |
| COMPANY:<br>HUD         | DATE:<br>April 18, 2000                     |
| FAX NUMBER:<br>456-6515 | TOTAL NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER:<br>4    |
| PHONE NUMBER:           | SENDER'S REFERENCE NUMBER:                  |
| RE:<br>Buy Back America | YOUR REFERENCE NUMBER:                      |

☒ URGENT ☐ FOR REVIEW ☐ PLEASE COMMENT ☐ PLEASE REPLY ☐ PLEASE RECYCLE

NOTES/COMMENTS:

Please note that this release also includes FY 2000 funding, that, two months ago, was made available for application in our Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). These funds have not yet been publicly announced outside of the NOFA.

[CLICK HERE AND TYPE RETURN ADDRESS]