

08/14/00 14:40

PATTY MURRAY
WASHINGTONCOMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
BUDGET
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR
AND PENSIONS
VETERANS AFFAIRS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4704

August 14, 2000

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to encourage you to host an event in September to promote the Student Pledge Against Gun Violence. Student, Members of Congress, and representatives from the American Federation of Teachers, National Association of Student Councils, National School Boards Association, National PTA, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals want to present the Pledge to you and use this event to launch their efforts to get millions of more young people to sign the Student Pledge Against Gun Violence this year.

Last year, over 2 million young people signed a voluntary pledge promising never to bring a gun to school or use a gun to settle a dispute, and to use their influence to discourage peers from resolving problems with guns.

For the last four years, the U.S. Senate has unanimously passed a resolution, for which I've been the chief sponsor during three of those four years. This resolution calls on the country to observe a Day of National Concern about Young People and Gun Violence and asks that the Student Pledge be distributed on that day as a means of underscoring the collective power of young people's individual decisions to end gun violence. For each of the last four years, you have reinforced the message of the Senate Resolution by issuing a Presidential Proclamation. This year I have again submitted the Resolution along with Senator Warner and 31 other Senators and I expect it to pass unanimously once again. It names October 17, 2000, as this year's Day of National Concern about Young People and Gun Violence.

The premise behind the distribution of a common contract on a common day is that through their own life-saving decisions and actions, young people themselves - one by one and collectively by the millions - can dramatically reduce their risk of gun violence. Young people in particular are more likely to believe in the impact of their actions and decisions if they see them as part of a large concerted effort. A collective promise suggests power and a real potential for significant change.

It would be appropriate to have an event at the White House this year to celebrate the over 2 million young people who took the Pledge in 1999 and to call out to even more young people to take the Pledge.

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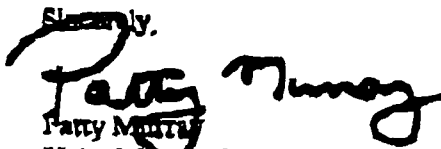
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A September date will be the most effective. It is the start of a new school year, and it will also give schools and communities time to build towards the observance. Too often young people are talked to as if they are a problem to be solved. A White House event in September will provide a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge them as important partners in the task of creating a safer future. Your encouragement, in particular, will illustrate to them that they matter and that their voices and commitments are honored at the highest level of the country.

I encourage you to host this event in September to roll out this year's Pledge and to celebrate the successes we've had in the past. I hope we can find time in our schedules to do this important event.

Sincerely,

Patty Murray
United States Senator

Attached: Letters from:

The American Federation of Teachers
The National Association of Secondary School Principals
The National Parent and Teachers Association
The National School Boards Association

A September White House Event

The event will honor the millions of students who have already made a commitment to end gun violence and serve as an invitation to the rest of the country's young people to join them in that commitment. It will be both a celebration and a launch for this year's October 17 Day of National Concern about Young People and Gun Violence.

If you agree, the event will include the following:

- Students wearing t-shirts with the powerful Pledge logo will present you with a large blow-up of the Student Pledge (see the enclosed). The number 2,026,164 will be painted in large figures across the blown-up Pledge to highlight the more than 2,000,000 students who last year made a commitment to end gun violence. Several students will make the presentation, noting that they are presenting you with a gift to the nation: their own and millions of other students' commitment to be part of the solution in reversing gun violence.
- Your recognition of those students who have taken part in this national commitment and an invitation from you to the rest of the country's young people, urging them to lift their voices together on this year's Day of Concern, in commitment to do all they can to end gun violence. (You could reaffirm the commitment of adults and all the groups represented there to continue doing all that we can to make the country safe from violence, but, at the same time, invite young people to make it a partnership effort and remind them that they have their own powerful, positive role to play.)
- Suggested speakers in addition to you: Senators Murray and Warner, students, and representatives of the partner educational association organizations.
- You will be surrounded by dozens – perhaps hundreds – of children and young people wearing Pledge t-shirts, some key members of the Senate, and leaders of several of the country's leading educational organizations.

Because the success of the observance rests on activities that take place primarily in schools, it will be very important to underscore the bi-partisan nature of the observance. *It will be equally important to deflect questions about gun control legislation within that particular context.* If the schools and the supporting educational associations saw the observance turn into a political football, the enormous support they have shown for it would dry up.

The occasion will provide a wonderful opportunity to make the point that *even in an election year*, some issues transcend politics and that the safety of the country's children is one of those issues. Presence of members of the Senate from both parties would underscore that message.

If gun control questions came up, you could answer that your commitment to better gun laws is unwavering, but that the gun problem, like the drug problem, has both a supply side and a demand side. Your legislative proposals address the supply side, but it's also important to underscore the role of the demand side – and it is on the demand side of the issue that young people's individual and collective decisions can play such a crucial role.



*Excellence and Equity
in Public Education
through School Board
Leadership*

August 3, 2000

The President
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President:

On March 30, 2000, the Board of Directors of the National School Boards Association unanimously endorsed the Day of National Concern about Young People and Gun Violence. As an organization dedicated to bettering the lives and education of our children, NSBA believes the voluntary student pledge is a wonderful approach since, in the final analysis, it is going to be students themselves who will be the main force in eliminating gun violence.

NSBA will encourage local school boards across the nation to participate in the October 17, 2000 Day of National Concern. We believe that holding a September pre-celebration event at the White House would greatly increase the visibility of this worthy effort. To that end, NSBA supports the proposal from Senator Patty Murray and her colleagues and ask you to give it your full consideration.

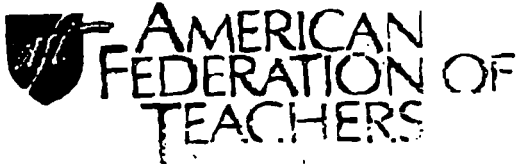
Sincerely,

Anne L. Bryant
Executive Director

ALB: mw

National School Boards Association

1680 Duke Street ■ Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3493 ■ (703) 838-NSBA ■ FAX: (703) 683-7590 ■ <http://www.nsba.org>

SANDRA FELDMAN
PresidentAMERICAN FEDERATION OF
TEACHERS

July 31, 2000

The Honorable Bill Clinton
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

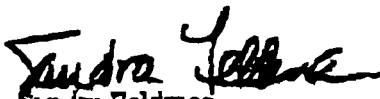
Dear Mr. President:

The American Federation of Teachers is an active coalition partner in the Day of National Concern About Young People and Gun Violence. We believe that it is important for the AFT to support the efforts of the coalition and to support our members' participation in the Day of National Concern through their local unions.

Ready access to guns and gun violence are of great concern to the leaders and members of our organization. That is why our members have encouraged students to participate since the event's inception. And, it is why we are in favor of a White House event to honor those students who have taken part in the Day of National Concern. Such an event would give a tremendous boost to the coalition's efforts to encourage all students to sign the pledge and participate in this year's Day of National Concern.

We will continue to support the efforts of the coalition and, through our local affiliates, encourage school districts to promote and participate in this important campaign. We would welcome and encourage your participation in an event to launch this year's program.

Sincerely,


Sandra Feldman
President

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**National PTA®**

August 14, 2000

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President William Clinton
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500-0001

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for providing leadership on the important topic of protecting children and youth from gun violence. The 6.5 million member National PTA joins Senator Murray, parents, and students in asking you to continue this important work and host the September 2000 launch of the Student Pledge Against Gun Violence drive.

Due to the tremendous impact on the health and well-being of children and youth, gun violence is a serious public health issue, which requires the enactment of various prevention strategies. National PTA supports federal legislation that promotes the use of gun safety locks, restricts Internet gun sales, enforces federal and state minimum age requirements for handgun purchases, and establishes or expands awareness programs that educate parents, children, youth and community members about firearm safety.

This event will let America's youth know that millions of citizens across the nation care about their health and well-being. Your participation in this event will also signal a federal commitment to ending gun violence. Thank you again for making an important difference in the lives of all children. We hope that you will be actively involved in this year's event.

Sincerely,

Ginny Markell
President

1004 Association Drive

Ruston, VA 22651-1237

703.856.0200

(fax) 703.476.5432

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

PRINCIPALS



August 8, 2000

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

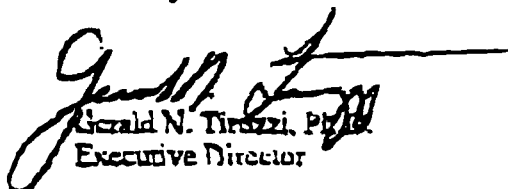
Though the number of violent incidents in schools continues to decrease and classrooms remain one of the safest places for students, there is no denying that gun violence is a national epidemic that negatively impacts the lives of many children and youth. That is why over 2,000,000 young people have signed the *Student Pledge Against Gun Violence*. We urge you to support these commitments by hosting a bipartisan White House event in September, to publicize this year's October 17 *Day of National Concern about Young People and Gun Violence* and to launch this year's national *Pledge drive*.

By signing the *Pledge*, each student promises to never bring a gun to school, to never use a gun to settle a dispute, and to use influence with friends in order to keep them from using guns to settle disputes. I can think of no better tool for ending youth violence than the self-motivated, responsible approach offered by this action. Middle and high school students are especially influenced by friends and colleagues, and the *Pledge* supports and reinforces each individual choice to act peacefully with regard to disagreements.

While the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) has strongly supported your commendable efforts to help end gun violence through legislative means, we envision the event as one that will not involve the sometimes divisive issue of politics. A bipartisan contingent of U.S. Senators already supports the *Day of National Concern* initiative. We hope many of them will attend the White House event in order to send a strong and unified message about the importance of self-motivated, non-violent action. It is our hope that the event will create a groundswell of interest, encouraging other young people around the nation to take the *Pledge*.

"Youngsters who are intimidated and fearful cannot be at ease; they cannot give education the single-minded attention needed for success." This statement appears in the NASSP school reform publication *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*. We believe the *Pledge* brings us one step closer to easing students' fears, and helps to create more effective learning environments for our children. I thank you for your tireless efforts on behalf of the nation's students and hope you agree that a White House event would be an excellent extension of your work to end gun violence in the United States.

Sincerely,


Gerald N. Tirazzi, Ph.D.
Executive Director

swd

promoting excellence in school leadership

Fifth Annual

Student Pledge Against Gun Violence

— October 17, 2000 —

A Day of National Concern About
Young People and Gun Violence



*A grassroots effort to encourage young people to take
a personal, active stance against gun violence*

Pledge against gun violence began in Minnesota

*Northfield woman's idea
has spread nationwide*

By Chuck Hage
Star Tribune Staff Writer

A national Student Pledge Against Gun Violence was started three years ago in Minnesota, and last year more than 1 million students nationwide signed it.

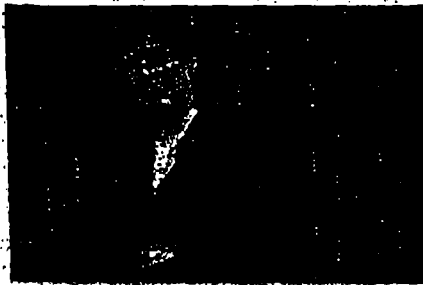
"Gun violence is one of the most corrosive issues we face in this country," said Mary Lewis Grpw, of Northfield, who started the pledge. "The natural inclination of kids is to be cynical: 'What can I do?' But the pledge says, 'We all have some control. Violence isn't inevitable.'"

The high school pledge, which students will sign this year on Oct. 21, states:

"I will never bring a gun to school. I will never use a gun to settle a dispute. I will use my influence with my friends to keep them from using guns to settle disputes."

"My individual choices and actions, when multiplied by young people throughout the country, WILL make a difference. Together, by honoring this pledge, we can reverse the violence and grow up in safety."

A separate pledge for elementary stu-



Mary Lewis Grpw's long-term commitment to reducing gun violence has given rise to national awareness projects.

dents states, "If I see a gun, I won't touch it. I will remember that any gun I see might be loaded. I know how important it is to keep myself safe."

Grpw said that her commitment to reduce gun violence began after the 1968 assassinations of Robert Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

"It's a scar on our national psyche," she said.

In 1994, she helped organize a project to collect 38,000 pairs of shoes and take them to display, empty, in Washington, D.C., to

dramatize how many gun deaths occur each year in the United States.

"We were trying to think of a way to connect kids to the issue," she said. "We thought, 'What if we have a common day, a common contract on kids' desks?'"

National teacher and student associations embraced the pledge. Project organizers believe that as many as 3 million students signed in 1998, but tabulation of results was incomplete.

Susan Sanderson, of Northfield, works on the project.

"I have two sons, 11 and 8," she said. "When you realize your young children are not safe in school, that's very unsettling."

She sensed a difference Wednesday as she dropped her sons off at their school.

They looked over at the high school, and I could see they made the connection with the high school in Colorado. They were thinking that things might look different today at the high school, but they were trying to reassure themselves: They're younger, they're safer.

"The pledge is a concrete thing that students can do," she said. "They sometimes feel powerless. They're not old enough to vote. But this ... gives them a voice, and that's a powerful thing."

THURSDAY, APRIL 22 • 1999

STAR TRIBUNE • PAGE A17

THE STAR TRIBUNE Minneapolis, Minnesota

For more information and downloadable pledges:

www.pledge.org

E-mail: mlgrow@microassist.com

Telephone: (507) 645-5378

Address: 112 Nevada Street

Northfield, MN 55057



I will never bring a gun to school;

I will never use a gun to settle a dispute;

I will use my influence with my friends to keep them
from using guns to settle disputes.

My individual choices and actions, when multiplied
by those of young people throughout the country, will
make a difference. Together, by honoring this pledge,
we can reverse the violence and grow up in safety.

Student Name: _____

Grade Level: _____

School Name: _____

School Address: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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