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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF DOMESTIC POLICY COUNCIL

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Deanne

OLD EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 224
WASHINGTON, DC 20050

VOICE: (202)456-

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NUMBER OF PAGES (INCLUDING COVER):

4

DATE:

4/18/00

TO:

Eric Liu / Anna Richter

VOICE:

FAX:

- [] FOR YOUR REVIEW
[] PER MY E-MAIL OR VOICE-MAIL MESSAGE TO YOU
[] PER YOUR REQUEST

COMMENTS:

PART I

Manufacturers' Firearms Entering Into Commerce

In enforcing the GCA, NFA, and firearms and ammunition excise tax provisions of the Internal Revenue Code, ATF collects information on the manufacture, importation and exportation of firearms. This section presents data on manufacturers' reported sales, along with reported exports and imports, to show the flow of new firearms to the domestic market over time. It also includes data for producer prices for firearms which are the best available price data and suggestive of the prices paid by consumers.

Manufacturers' Sales, Exports and Imports

Firearms manufacturers and importers are required by law to maintain records of the production, export, and import of firearms. Manufacturers' reports to ATF show the number of manufactured firearms "disposed of in commerce" each calendar year, as well as the number produced for export.² The term "disposed of in commerce" refers to manufacturers' final sales, which equal production of firearms less the increase in manufacturers' inventories of firearms. Data from these reports are available by specific types of firearms and are reported in Appendix A. The manufacturers' reports exclude production for the U.S. military, but include firearms purchased by domestic law enforcement agencies. The annual volume of firearms imports by year is compiled by ATF and the Bureau of the Census from U.S. Customs data.³

Secondhand firearms and other data limitations

Care must be taken in interpreting these data. The data from the manufacturers' reports do not represent retail sales to the civilian market. Rather, they represent firearms produced by manufacturers for distribution, and include production for law enforcement uses as well as for civilians. Retail sales differ from the manufacturers' net sales shown in the figures, because retail sales do not include firearms accumulated in wholesaler and retailer inventories or sales to law enforcement agencies.⁴ Further, the data represent sales of *new* firearms and say nothing about trade in secondhand firearms. A recent survey suggests that trade in secondhand firearms runs at about two million per year.⁵ These firearms may be sold in the primary or secondary market.⁶ Although the data are subject to limitations, some broad inferences can be drawn.

² The forms used by manufacturers to report "dispositions" and exports can be found in Appendix B.

³ See Appendix Tables A.1.1-A.1.4 for data on the number of domestically manufactured firearms, exports and imports. Import data were compiled by ATF by fiscal year prior to 1992, and by calendar year after 1992.

⁴ The data reported here also raise measurement concerns. The data from the manufacturers' reports are compiled without follow-up verification or cross checks so errors that occur in the filing of the reports result directly in errors in the data. The measurement of exports is not exact because firearms licensees other than manufacturers also export firearms. Finally, ATF began collecting the data from manufacturers in 1972; data prior to that were collected through alternative sources and are not exactly comparable.

⁵ *Guns in America, Results of a Comprehensive National Survey on Firearms Ownership and Use*, Philip J. Cook and Jens Ludwig, Police Foundation, 1996.

⁶ The primary market denotes sales occurring through FFLs. The secondary market denotes transactions through unlicensed sellers.

Commerce in Firearms in the United States • Department of the Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms

U.S. as net importer

Figure 1 shows the reported number of small arms firearms (handguns, rifles and shotguns) sold by manufacturers along with reported exports and imports from 1947 to 1998.⁷

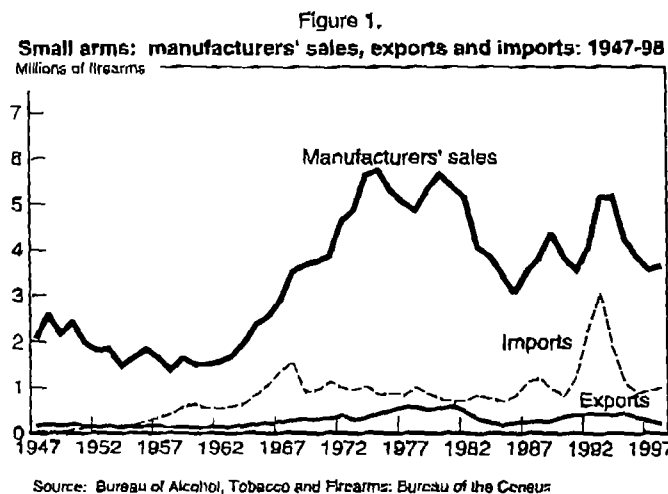
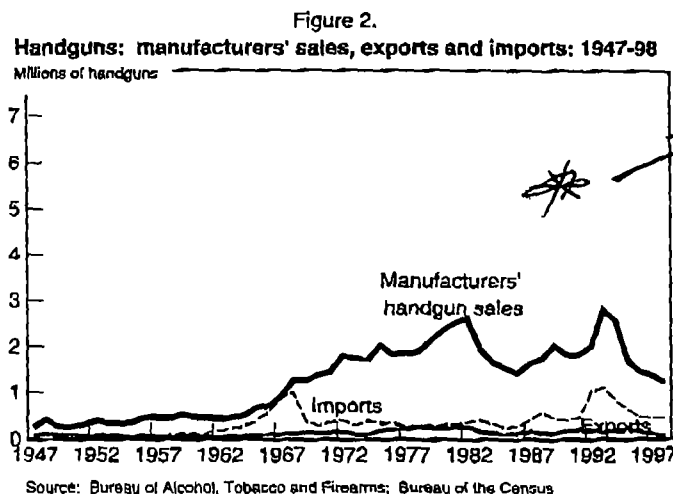


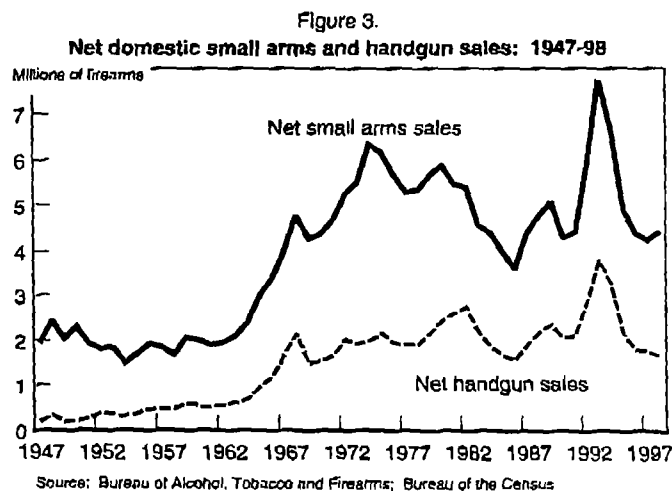
Figure 2 shows reported handgun sales, exports and imports over the same period. In both figures, imports generally have exceeded exports – that is, the U.S. is a net importer of small arms. From 1990 to 1999, the data suggest that net imports of rifles, shotguns and



handguns combined averaged as much as 1 million per year, with handguns accounting for about half that amount.⁸

Net domestic sales

Figure 3 presents net domestic sales for total small arms and for the subcategory of handguns – with net domestic sales defined as manufacturers' sales minus exports plus imports. Annual firearms sales in the United States have trended up over the past 50 years.



surging in the early 1990s to a peak in 1993 of nearly 8 million small arms, of which 4 million were handguns. In recent years, sales have fallen back to about half that peak level – nearly 4-1/2 million annually – roughly the same level as in the mid- to late-1980s. As noted earlier, these sales are for new firearms.

Figure 3 shows that a significant part of the increase in overall firearms sales in the period from 1990 to 1993 can be attributed to an increase in handgun sales. The surge in sales may have resulted from efforts to purchase firearms, particularly handguns, prior to enactment of the Brady Act. Another possible factor is public perceptions of higher crime; both the

⁷ As used in this discussion, the term "small arms" refers to handguns, rifles and shotguns, but excludes machine guns and other weapons that are often classified as small arms. Import data used for Figures 1, 2 and 3 have been adjusted for 1992 and earlier years to approximate calendar year values.

⁸ ATF's National Tracing Center data show that for fiscal years 1998 and 1999, 12.9 percent of traced crime guns were of foreign manufacture.

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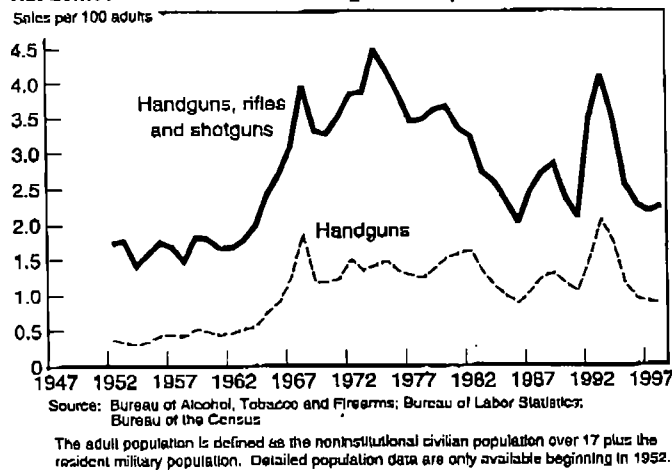
violent crime rate and the firearm homicide rate peaked in the early 1990s. *This is more like 230*

A survey conducted in 1994 showed that the total number of firearms in private hands today is approximately 200 million.⁹ This finding is consistent with the data on the flow of new guns described above, recognizing that firearms have a long life.

Population growth and firearms sales

To examine the role of population growth in the upward trend in firearms sales, Figure 4 presents net sales per 100 adult residents of the United States. Because the adult population has increased dramatically over the past 50

Figure 4.
Net domestic small arms and handgun sales per 100 adults: 1952-98

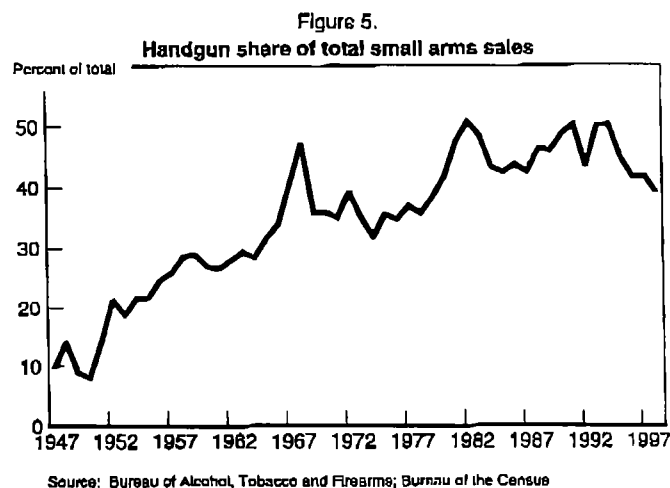


years, the long-term upward trend in sales shown in Figure 3 is significantly muted in Figure 4. Still, sales per adult are higher today than in the 1950s and early 1960s. Indeed, sales of handguns per adult are now roughly twice the

level of forty years ago. The temporary spike in the sales of handguns and other small arms in the early 1990s is as evident in Figure 4 as in Figure 3.

Handgun share of firearms sales

The relative mix of sales between long guns and handguns has changed significantly over time, with handguns accounting for a growing share of total sales (Figure 5). The handgun share trended up steadily from the late 1940s, when



handguns accounted for about 1 out of every 10 small arms sold, to the early 1990s, when handguns accounted for roughly half of the sales of small arms. The handgun share has slipped back slightly in recent years, to about 40 percent of small arms sales. Handguns are of particular interest because they are the weapon of preference in the commission of gun crimes and two-thirds of all homicides in the United States are committed using handguns.¹⁰

⁹ *Guns in America*.

¹⁰ Centers for Disease Control.



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COMMENTS:

Department of the Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms • Commerce in Firearms in the United States

Table A.1.1—Firearms Manufacturers' Shipments, 1899-1998

Year	Number of weapons in thousands					
	Total	Handguns				Shotguns
		Total	Pistols	Revolvers	Rifles	
1899-1945	45,711	11,722	...	...	20,651	13,338
1946	1,526	176	...	...	729	621
1947	2,070	257	...	...	953	860
1948	2,610	427	...	...	1,170	1,013
1949	2,168	256	...	...	862	1,050
1950	2,432	261	...	...	847	1,324
1951	1,976	307	...	...	668	1,001
1952	1,818	398	...	...	541	948
1953	1,844	355	...	...	541	948
1954	1,471	327	...	...	437	707
1955	1,657	362	...	...	556	739
1956	1,835	451	...	...	554	830
1957	1,662	460	...	...	514	688
1958	1,377	440	...	...	406	531
1959	1,646	519	...	...	517	610
1960	1,508	475	...	...	469	564
1961	1,504	447	...	...	482	575
1962	1,551	431	...	...	529	591
1963	1,671	453	...	...	579	639
1964	1,950	491	...	...	713	746
1965	2,355	666	...	...	790	899
1966	2,526	700	...	...	850	976
1967	2,879	926	...	...	909	1,044
1968	3,514	1,259	...	...	1,100	1,155
1969	3,671	1,255	...	...	1,297	1,119
1970	3,733	1,394	...	...	1,195	1,144
1971	3,858	1,448	...	...	1,269	1,141
1972	4,617	1,805	...	...	1,677	1,135
1973	4,842	1,734	...	...	1,837	1,271
1974	5,623	1,715	...	...	2,105	1,803
1975	5,745	2,024	...	...	2,126	1,595
1976	5,282	1,833	...	...	2,112	1,337
1977	5,038	1,880	...	...	1,933	1,225
1978	4,861	1,877	...	...	1,788	1,196
1979	5,320	2,124	...	...	1,876	1,320
1980	5,645	2,370	764	1,605	1,936	1,339
1981	5,374	2,537	835	1,702	1,681	1,156
1982	5,130	2,629	853	1,775	1,623	879
1983	4,036	1,967	734	1,233	1,110	960
1984	3,873	1,680	753	927	1,107	1,086
1985	3,460	1,550	707	844	1,141	770
1986	3,040	1,428	693	735	971	641
1987	3,523	1,659	964	695	1,006	858
1988	3,818	1,746	991	755	1,145	928
1989	4,374	2,031	1,403	629	1,407	936
1990	3,844	1,839	1,376	462	1,156	849
1991	3,550	1,838	1,381	457	883	828
1992	4,030	2,010	1,550	460	1,002	1,018
1993	5,130	2,825	2,272	553	1,160	1,145
1994	5,161	2,582	1,996	586	1,324	1,255
1995	4,228	1,723	1,195	528	1,332	1,174
1996	3,835	1,484	986	499	1,424	926
1997	3,574	1,407	1,036	370	1,251	916
1998	3,645	1,240	916	324	1,536	869

Source: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Department of the Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms • Commerce in Firearms in the United States

Table A.1.3—Firearms Imports, 1899-1999

Year	Number of weapons in thousands			
	Total Imported	Handguns	Rifles	Shotguns
1899-1945	2,013	769	531	713
1946	7	0	0	7
1947	30	7	0	23
1948	50	17	4	29
1949	36	7	5	24
1950	63	17	14	32
1951	110	41	24	45
1952	139	56	27	56
1953	155	61	13	81
1954	143	50	11	82
1955	171	67	15	89
1956	214	84	38	92
1957	318	78	130	110
1958	370	79	198	93
1959	528	130	269	129
1960	655	128	402	125
1961	533	115	310	108
1962	516	168	231	117
1963	562	223	219	120
1964	574	253	182	139
1965	766	347	245	174
1966	996	513	291	192
1967	1,208	747	239	222
1968	1,784	1,240	263	281
1969	889	406	197	286
1970	855	280	219	356
1971	1,156	337	253	566
1972	1,038	440	178	420
1973	859	248	189	422
1974	1,113	408	175	530
1975	793	312	169	312
1976	918	345	139	434
1977	751	253	184	314
1978	1,040	272	278	490
1979	886	271	257	358
1980	754	299	182	273
1981	689	306	200	184
1982	665	333	175	157
1983	838	411	228	199
1984	773	342	213	219
1985	697	229	271	197
1986	701	231	269	201
1987	1,064	342	414	308
1988	1,276	622	283	372
1989	1,008	440	293	274
1990	844	449	204	192
1991	721	293	311	116
1992	2,847	982	1,423	442
1993	3,043	1,205	1,593	246
1994	1,881	915	848	118
1995	1,103	706	261	136
1996	882	491	263	128
1997	939	474	359	106
1998	1,000	532	249	219
1999	892	308	198	386

Source: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Data prior to 1992 are for fiscal years; data after 1992 are calendar years; 1992 is a transition year with five quarters.

March 20, 2000

Orrin Hatch
Chairman
Committee of the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Since last summer, I have repeatedly urged the Congress to finish its work on juvenile crime legislation and pass a balanced, bipartisan bill with strong gun measures to keep guns out of the hands of children and criminals. However, I am troubled by your recent comments that you are considering stripping the Senate-passed common sense gun provisions out of the final conference report. Legislation intended to address the problem of youth violence simply cannot ignore the most devastating problem facing our youth -- gun violence.

Let me be clear: I will not sign juvenile crime legislation that fails to move forward in our effort to make guns safer and to keep them out of the hands of children and criminals.

Last summer, the Senate passed reasonable gun provisions that would help do just this, by closing the gun show loophole, requiring child safety locks for handguns, barring violent juveniles from owning guns as adults, and banning the importation of large capacity ammunition clips. These measures can help save lives and should be enacted without further delay.

Last week, my Administration, joined by many cities and states, reached a landmark agreement with Smith and Wesson under which the company will change the way it designs, distributes and markets its products. That pact -- which includes important provisions on gun shows, child safety locks, and large ammunition clips -- is proof that when reasonable people choose to sit down and negotiate, they can find common ground and protect the public interest. I hope Congress can now build on that example.

Nearly a year has passed since the tragedy at Columbine High School, and gunfire continues to take the lives of nearly a dozen young people a day. That is why I urge you once again to finish the job you started last year, and send me a comprehensive juvenile crime bill that contains the Senate-passed gun safety measures. No task could be more urgent.

Sincerely,
BC

Draft 3/16/00 6:20pm
Lowell Weiss

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
RADIO ADDRESS ON GUN VIOLENCE
THE WHITE HOUSE
March 17, 2000**

Good morning. Today, I want to report to you on our efforts, and those of many others, to reduce the staggering toll of gun violence in America. And I want to implore you to make our democracy work, by making your voice heard in this critical national debate.

A month from now, Littleton, Colorado, will mark the one-year anniversary of the shooting spree that horrified this nation. I have met with the parents of students who were killed that day – as with the parents of six-year-old Kayla Rolland and other young schoolchildren lost forever to senseless gunfire. So many of the grieving parents have made the same plea: Please -- make it harder for criminals and children to get their hands on guns.

Last year, with a tie-breaking vote by Vice President Gore, the Senate passed a bill that would go a long way toward answering that plea – by requiring child safety locks, banning large ammunition clips, and closing the loophole that allows criminals to buy firearms at gun shows. Unfortunately, the House passed much weaker legislation. Even more disturbing, eight months have gone by and the Congress has taken almost no action to complete a bill.

But this week there are some signs of progress. Today, I am joined in the Oval Office by three Members of Congress who are helping to break the logjam: Rep. Zoe Lofgren of California, Rep. Carolyn McCarthy of New York, and Rep. Connie Morella of Maryland. Thanks to their leadership, House members from both parties voted on Wednesday to push Congressional negotiators to meet and begin to resolve their differences on this crucial legislation. This vote was a modest measure, but it sent a big message. It said to Republican leaders: The American people have no more tolerance for your delays. If you want to oppose gun-safety legislation, then stand up and say so. But don't kill this bill with stall tactics. It's time for a public debate. It's time for action.

All across the nation, the same message is coming through loud and clear. From Colorado to Maryland to New York, Governors and leaders from both parties are moving to enact common-sense gun-safety laws. These bipartisan efforts only underscore how out-of-touch the gun lobby and the Congressional leadership have become in opposing real reform.

Of course, no law can prevent every gun death. But sensible gun laws do make a real difference. When we passed the Brady Bill, people argued that it wouldn't work because criminals don't buy guns at gun stores. It turned out that many of them did. Just this week, we received the first review of the instant background check system we put in place under the Brady Law – over the strong opposition of the NRA. The report shows that in its first year, the instant check system stopped nearly 180,000 illegal gun sales – and 95% of all checks were completed in two hours or less. All told, since we passed the Brady Law in 1993, we have stopped half a million guns from falling into the hands of fugitives, felons, or stalkers – and gun crime is down more than 35 percent.

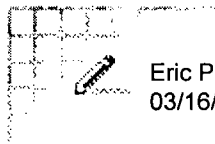
ERIC -
your edits
were excellent,
as always. I've
made nearly all
of them. ~~But only~~
~~only~~ I didn't even
make all of them
entirely
only
because of
length
concerns.
I had
to cut
words
50 from the
1st draft.
It's now
720
words -
still pushing
it a bit.
- Lowell

Another argument you'll hear is that we have to enforce laws on the books. Well, the fact is, we are. We have increased federal gun prosecutions by 16% since in 1992. And my new budget calls for the largest firearms enforcement initiative in history.

But it is absurd to say that we must do punishment and ignore prevention. We need both. Suppose I said to you that I wanted to take all metal detectors out of airports, on the notion that 99.9 percent of the people who walk through them are law-abiding citizens who don't deserve to be inconvenienced. Suppose I said that instead of metal detectors, we should just add 10 years to the sentence the next time someone blows up an airplane. Unfortunately, that is the kind of destructive logic we are hearing from the NRA.

The opponents of reform have run out of sensible arguments – so now they want to run out the clock. We can't let them. Call your Senators and Representative in Congress. Let them know that we can't wait for action when a dozen children are dying from gunfire every day. Let them know that you want sensible gun-safety legislation by the anniversary of the Columbine tragedy. Let them hear your voice. Thanks for listening.

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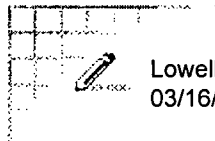


Eric P. Liu
03/16/2000 05:46:28 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Lowell A. Weiss/WHO/EOP@EOP
cc: Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP@EOP, Leanne A. Shimabukuro/OPD/EOP@EOP, Deanne E. Benos/OPD/EOP@EOP, Anna Richter/OPD/EOP@EOP
bcc: Records Management@EOP
Subject: Re: radio draft

Lowell -- you'll have the lines on Capitol Hill all lit up! My changes in bold
Lowell A. Weiss



Lowell A. Weiss
03/16/2000 04:05:02 PM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message
cc:
Subject: radio draft

Draft 3/16/00 4:00pm
Lowell Weiss

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
RADIO ADDRESS ON GUN VIOLENCE
THE WHITE HOUSE
March 17, 2000**

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A month from now, Littleton, Colorado, will mark the one-year anniversary of the incomprehensible shooting spree that horrified this nation – and, indeed, much of the world. I have met with the parents of students who were killed that day – as with the parents of six-year-old Kayla Rolland and other young schoolchildren lost forever to gunfire. Nearly every one of the grieving parents has **made the same plea**: **Don't** tell me my child died in vain. Please **[add pause]**-- make it harder for criminals and children to get their hands on deadly guns.

Last year, with a tie-breaking vote by Vice President Gore, the Senate passed a juvenile crime bill that would go a long way toward **answering** that plea – requiring child safety locks with all new handguns, banning large ammunition clips, and closing the loophole that allows criminals to buy firearms at gun shows. Unfortunately, the House passed much weaker legislation. Even more disturbing, eight months have gone by and the Congress has taken almost no action to complete a **[cutfinal]** bill. **In fact, for over eight months now, the leadership has refused to allow a single meeting to work out a final bill.**

But now there are some signs of progress. Today, I am joined in the Oval Office by three Members of Congress who are helping to break the eight-month logjam: Rep. Zoe Lofgren of California, Rep. Carolyn McCarthy of New York, and Rep. Connie Morella of Maryland. Thanks in great measure to their leadership, House members from both parties voted this week to push Congressional negotiators to meet and begin to resolve their differences on this crucial legislation. This vote was a modest measure, but it sent a big message. It said to Republican leaders: The American people have no more tolerance for your delays. **If you want to oppose gun safety legislation, then stand up and say so -- but don't kill this bill with stall tactics.** It's time to answer to the interests of our children and not to intimidation by the NRA.

All across the nation, the same message is coming through loud and clear. In states from Colorado to Maryland to New York, Governors and leaders from both parties are **[cut swiftly]** moving to enact common-sense gun-safety laws. These bipartisan **[cutstate]** efforts only underscore how out-of-touch the gun lobby and the Congressional leadership have become in their opposition to reform.

Of course, no law can prevent every gun death. But sensible gun laws do make a real difference. When we passed the Brady Bill, people argued that it wouldn't work because criminals don't buy guns at gun stores. It turned out that many of them did. Just this week, we received the Justice Department's first annual review of the instant background check system we put in place under the Brady Law, in November of 1998. The report shows that in its first year, the instant check system stopped nearly 179,000 illegal gun sales – and 95% of all checks were completed in two hours or less. All told, since we passed the Brady Law in 1993, we have stopped half a million guns from falling into the hands of fugitives, felons, or stalkers – and gun crime is down more than 35 percent.

Another argument you'll hear is that we have to enforce the laws on the books. Well, the fact is, we are. [cutProsecution of gun crimes is another essential tool. That is why] We have increased federal gun prosecutions by 16% since in 1992, **and my new budget calls for the largest firearms enforcement initiative in history, to help punish bad dealers and illegal gun trafficking.**

But it is silly to say that we have to do punishment and ignore prevention. We need both. Suppose I said to you that I wanted to take all metal detectors out of airports, under the theory that 99.9 percent of the people who walk through them are good, law-abiding citizens who don't deserve to be inconvenienced. Suppose I said that instead of metal

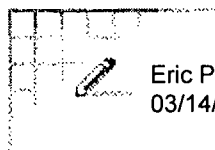
detectors, we should just add 10 years to a sentence the next time someone blows up an airplane. Unfortunately, that is the kind of destructive logic we are hearing from the NRA.

The opponents of reform have run out of arguments -- so now they want to run out the clock. We can't let them. [cutSo] I say directly to each of you listening today: [cut this sentence --enough on the NRAPlease don't let the NRA drown out your voice in this debate with their millions of dollars in ads]. Call your Senators and your Representative in Congress **[cut to share your views]. Let them know you'll support them if they have the courage to stand up to the gun lobby. [cut thisLet them know that you want prosecution and prevention] . Let them know that you want sensible gun-safety legislation by the anniversary of the Columbine tragedy. [cutnow just over a month away]. Let them hear your voice. Thanks for listening.**

#

Message Sent To:

Eric P. Liu/OPD/EOP@EOP
Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP@EOP
Cathy R. Mays/OPD/EOP@EOP
Leanne A. Shimabukuro/OPD/EOP@EOP
Deanne E. Benos/OPD/EOP@EOP

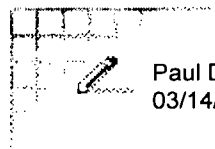


Eric P. Liu
03/14/2000 07:21:28 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Paul D. Glastris/WHO/EOP@EOP
cc: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message
bcc: Records Management@EOP
Subject: Re: first draft of tomorrow's gun remarks 

Paul -- as always, you know how to take it to the enemy! Edits in bold and underlined.
Paul D. Glastris



Paul D. Glastris
03/14/2000 05:46:25 PM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message
cc:
Subject: first draft of tomorrow's gun remarks

Draft 3/14/00 5:45 p.m.
Glastris

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
REMARKS AT GUN LEGISLATION RALLY
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC
March 15, 2000**

Acknowledgements: Rep. McCarthy; Rep. Morella; Rep. Lofgren; Sec. Reno; Sec. Summers;

Six years ago, here at the White House, I signed the Brady Bill into law. I was especially pleased that day to be standing beside two **courageous** ~~[strike--awk.woman]~~ fighters against gun violence, Sarah Brady and Attorney General Janet Reno. Today, as I stand here with Congresswomen McCarthy, Morella, and Lofgren, I am reminded that **women** --from both parties--have been and remain at the forefront of this fight. And I am grateful that they have allowed some men to join them **today**.

When I signed the Brady bill **six years ago**, I said that our efforts "proved once again

that democracy can work.” The American people—and their grassroots demand for common sense action against gun violence--prevailed over an entrenched and powerful Washington gun lobby.

Today, America is a safer place thanks to the Brady Law, and other measures that many here in this room championed—from banning assault weapons to putting 100,000 more police on the street. We’ve cut the rate of gun crime by 35 percent since 1993. Homicide is at its lowest rate in over 30 years. But as we’ve seen time and time again—from Littleton to tk—it is still far too easy for guns to fall into the wrong hands.

It is time to strengthen the Brady Law by passing a strong juvenile justice bill that closes the gun show loophole, required safety locks with all new handguns, and ban the importation of large-capacity ammunition clips. **It's time to pass laws that hold adults accountable for letting children get access to deadly weapons.** But once again, the gun lobby and their allies in the Republican leadership are resisting with all their might. Once again, we are battling not just for the safety of our families, but for the soundness of our democracy.

For nine months, the majority leadership, under pressure from the gun lobby, has refused to allow the House-Senate conferees meet and have a substantive debate on the juvenile crime bill. **Rep. Zoe Lofgren has offered a motion that simply calls for the conferees to meet, and later today the House will vote on it. The motion is non-binding, and frankly, it should be non-controversial. But the gun lobby has responded by** threatening retribution against any lawmaker who votes for **it**. **Now, why would the gun lobby fear an open debate about this? Why, rather than welcoming debate, would they threaten lawmakers and make slash-and burn personal attacks?**

Well, **maybe it's because they've simply run out of arguments. [CUT THE REST OF GRAF -- there's an old Chinese proverb: “The man who strikes first admits that he has run out of arguments.” The fact is, the opponents of stronger gun safety laws have simply run out of arguments.]**

Back in 1993, they said the Brady bill threatened the right of citizens to own firearms. Today, we know that the Second Amendment is alive and well. They said gun violence would not be reduced. In fact, gun crimes have fallen by over 35 percent since 1993, and police chiefs across America believe the Brady law was vital to their efforts. They said that requiring background checks at gun stores wouldn’t keep guns out of the hands of criminals because criminals don’t buy guns at stores. That claim has now been disproved thousands of times.

Today, I am pleased to announce the results of the Justice Department’s first annual review of the instant criminal background check system that we put in place in November of 1998 under the Brady Law. According to this report, on its first year, the instant check system stopped nearly 179,000 illegal gun sales. Two-thirds of those sales were to people indicted or convicted of felony crimes. Most of the rest were fugitives or

had records of domestic violence, drug abuse, or mental illness. All told, since we passed the Brady Law in 1994, we have stopped nearly half a million guns from falling into the wrong hands.

The Brady Law has worked so well, in fact, that criminals now have to buy their weapons at places not fully covered by the law, such as gun shows. That's why, last year, I called for—and the Senate passed—legislation extending Brady background checks to gun shows and flea markets[CUT, when guns are sold along with other items]. But instead of allowing the House-Senate conferees to meet and finish the job, Republican leaders in Congress, at the behest of the gun lobby, continue to cling to arguments that wouldn't stand up in an honest debate.

They say that gun shows would be put out of business if the unlicensed dealers who sell guns there had to comply with Brady background checks, which can take up to three days to complete. But licensed dealers at gun shows already have to do background checks, and they're still doing a brisk business. For a simple reason: Nearly three-quarters of all Brady background checks are completed in seconds, as this new report shows, and 95 percent are completed in two hours or less.

But the five percent who are left -- those whose Brady checks take longer than 24 hours -- are almost 20 times more likely to be convicted felons or otherwise prohibited from owning firearms. These are precisely the people the background checks are supposed to be stopping. **In fact, if the time limit for all Brady background checks since 1994 had been [cut limited to] only 24 hours, nearly 34,000 more guns would have been sold to felons, fugitives, and domestic abusers. Congress shouldn't handcuff law enforcement by limiting the length of time we allow for background checks.**

Another tired argument our opponents make is that instead of stronger gun laws we should enforce more strongly the laws we have on the books. The fact is, we already are. Federal gun prosecutions are up 16 percent since 1993, **overall prosecutions are up 25 percent,** and I **think we can do even** more. My budget calls for hiring **1000 new** federal and local gun prosecutors; hiring **500 new** ATF agents to crack down on illegal gun traffickers and bad-apple dealers; and giving law enforcement the tools they need to trace every gun and every bullet used in every gun crime in the United States. We must strengthen gun enforcement *and* strengthen our gun laws. The two go hand in hand.

There really isn't a single good argument to oppose closing the gun show loophole. **But if those on the other side think they have one, let's hear it. They shouldn't be afraid to tell the American people why they oppose gun safety legislation. They shouldn't hide behind procedure. They should let the conferees meet and have an open debate. I believe that if they do, and if they listen to the vast majority of the people they represent, they can pass a common-sense juvenile crime bill that closes the gun show loophole, requires safety locks with all new handguns, and bans the importation of large-capacity ammunition clips. For the sake of our children, we must do this.**

Now, it is my pleasure to introduce somebody who has gun safety and the safety of our children her mission in life, Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy.

[after Rep. Lofgren speaks, you return to the podium and close out the event.]

I want to thank Rep. Lofgren, and all the other speakers, and everyone else who has come here today to send a message to the leadership in Congress: stop stalling. Let's debate and pass strong, common-sense gun safety legislation. If we do, we can make America what it ought to be: the safest big nation on Earth in the 21st Century.

Thank you and God bless you.

Message Sent To:

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**New York Gun Plan
Question and Answer
March 16, 2000**

Q: Yesterday, Governor Pataki unveiled a five-point plan on guns: requiring ballistics information on all handguns; mandating child safety locks for guns; imposing an assault weapons ban; requiring background checks at gun shows; and raising the age to get a handgun permit to 21. What is your position on his plan?

A: While we haven't seen the details, the Governor's plan bears a very close resemblance to gun initiatives proposed by President Clinton, and that is encouraging. It reminds us that outside Washington, gun safety legislation is not a partisan issue. Governors and leaders from both parties are moving to enact common sense legislation. The fact is, though, we still need national legislation to make sure that in every state, guns are kept out of the wrong hands. As the President has been saying, it's long past time for Congress to get to work and send him a gun safety bill he can sign. The Governor's proposals -- including closing the gun show loophole and requiring child safety locks -- only underscore how out of touch the gun lobby and the Congressional leadership have become in their opposition to reform. We hope Congress gets the message: the American people want common sense gun legislation, and the time to do it is now.

Draft 03/16/00 8:45am
Jeff Shesol

PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
DEPARTURE STATEMENT ON GUN LEGISLATION AND THE BUDGET
THE WHITE HOUSE
March 16, 2000

Good afternoon. I'd like to say just a few words before I depart.

Yesterday, in a bipartisan vote, the House took a small but significant step down the long road toward a common-sense gun bill. At long last, House members have loosened the grip of the gun lobby enough to say: It's time to get to work. It's time – after eight months, after so many senseless shootings – it's time for House and Senate conferees to resolve their differences on this crucial legislation.

The American people have spoken clearly and consistently about the need to protect our children from gun violence. The House, it now appears, is listening. I hope Republican leaders will listen, too. Yesterday's vote leaves them no more excuses for stalling; no more excuses for holding this process hostage; no more excuses for keeping the conferees from meeting and working together to keep guns out of the wrong hands.

Of course, a meeting is just a beginning. Congress should keep working until it sends me a bill I can sign – legislation that closes the gun show loophole, requires child safety locks with all new handguns, and bans the importation of large-capacity ammunition clips.

The bipartisan vote yesterday is proof that attack ads, name-calling, and threats will not deter us from carrying out the will of the American people. But there are further tests ahead. We are just one month away from the anniversary of Columbine, and Congress has not yet passed a common-sense gun bill. The clock is ticking. America is waiting – to see whether Congress will answer to the interests of our children and not to intimidation by the NRA.

I also want to say a few words about the budget that House Republicans proposed yesterday. A budget, of course, is more than a balance sheet. It's a blueprint for America's future. For seven years, our administration has worked to build that future on a solid foundation of fiscal discipline. But the budget proposed by Republican leaders would erode our fiscal discipline. It would weaken, not strengthen, the foundation that Americans have worked so hard to build for our future.

Before devoting a single dollar to pay down the debt, or extend the solvency of Social Security and Medicare, or provide a voluntary prescription-drug benefit, or invest in our children's education, Republicans in Congress have already spent almost half a trillion dollars in irresponsible tax cuts. Almost half a trillion dollars, and – as the Republican budget now makes clear – they're just getting started.

This Republican budget is unrealistic; its enormous tax cuts are unwise; and the risks it poses are simply unconscionable. It is every bit as risky and costly as the budget they tried to pass last fall. Once again, their budget would undermine our ability to make America debt-free by 2013, or to strengthen Social Security and Medicare, or to add a voluntary prescription-drug benefit. It would also slash our most pressing priorities across the board – from education to the environment; from law enforcement to public health; from scientific research to basic nutrition.

This, as I have said, is the wrong path for America. It would lead us straight into a fiscal dead-end. Again, I urge Republican leaders to change course – and write a budget that maintains our fiscal discipline, meets our most pressing priorities, and makes the most of this moment of prosperity. Thank you.

**PRESIDENT CLINTON ANNOUNCES NEW REPORT ON EFFECTIVENESS OF
NATIONAL INSTANT CHECK SYSTEM AND URGES PASSAGE OF
COMMON SENSE GUN LAWS**

March 15, 2000

Joined by members of Congress, President Clinton today will unveil the FBI's first annual report on the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) created under the Brady Law. The new report shows that in its first year of operation, the NICS stopped 179,000 felons, fugitives, domestic abusers, and other prohibited persons from buying guns. The President today will also highlight his budget proposal to make Brady checks even faster and more effective. Finally, he will urge Congress to resist the gun lobby by passing the motion Representative Lofgren will offer today calling on juvenile justice conferees to meet in the next two weeks, and by moving on gun safety legislation that has been stalled for over eight months.

RELEASING FIRST ANNUAL REPORT ON NATIONAL INSTANT CHECK SYSTEM.

Today's report confirms that the NICS is a powerful tool to help law enforcement and federally-licensed gun dealers keep guns out of the wrong hands. In its first 13 months of operation (November 30, 1998-December 31, 1999), the NICS conducted over 10 million background checks and blocked an estimated 179,000 prohibited gun sales. Through NICS, the FBI and its state and local law enforcement partners perform instant searches of over 35 million records to help prevent the sale of guns to prohibited buyers. To date, the Brady Law has stopped more than 500,000 felons, fugitives, and other prohibited persons from purchasing firearms. Among the key findings of today's report:

- **Most checks completed within seconds.** During the first year of NICS, 72 percent of checks were completed within 30 seconds, and 95 percent were completed within two hours. In the remaining cases where completing a check takes longer, there is a strong law enforcement rationale for additional time: an individual whose check takes more than 24 hours to complete is almost 20 times more likely than the average gun buyer to be a felon or other prohibited purchaser.
- **Vast majority of sales blocked to felons and other criminals.** Of sales denied by the FBI, 71 percent were to felons, 15 percent to individuals with domestic violence misdemeanors or under restraining orders, and 4 percent to persons with histories of drug abuse.
- **NICS checks help law enforcement apprehend fugitives.** The report shows that NICS prevented more than 2,400 wanted persons from buying guns, and that FBI employees identified those persons to federal, state and local law enforcement agencies – leading to the apprehension of dangerous fugitives from justice.
- **Cutting time for law enforcement checks means more criminals get guns.** The report shows that if the FBI were given only 24 hours to complete all background checks, instead of up to three business days as under current law, nearly 34,000 prohibited purchasers – over 38 percent of FBI denials – would have received guns since the NICS first took effect.

DOUBLING FUNDS TO MAKE BRADY CHECKS FASTER AND MORE EFFECTIVE.

The President today will also announce that his FY 2001 budget provides \$70 million to give law enforcement more tools to increase the speed and accuracy of Brady Background checks, and keep guns out of the hands of even more prohibited persons. The President's initiative doubles funding for the National Criminal History Records Improvement Program (NCHIP), created under the Brady Law to improve the accessibility of records used for Brady background checks. NCHIP helps states to update, computerize and complete their records on felons, fugitives, domestic abusers, mentally ill prohibited persons and others restricted from purchasing firearms. To date, over \$200 million has been provided to states through NCHIP.

PUSHING FOR BIPARTISAN CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON COMMON SENSE GUN LEGISLATION.

For over eight months, the Republican leadership has refused to allow the House and Senate conferees to meet and have a substantive debate on the common sense gun measures in the pending juvenile crime bill. Joined by a bipartisan group of House members, the President will urge Congress to pass Representative Lofgren's motion today calling on conferees to meet in the next two weeks. The President will also call again on Congress to send him strong gun safety legislation that would: require background checks at gun shows; mandate the sale of child safety locks with handguns; bar the importation of high capacity ammunition clips; and hold adults accountable if they allow children easy access to loaded guns that are later used to kill or maim. As part of his comprehensive strategy to reduce gun violence, the President will also urge support for his \$280 million National Gun Enforcement Initiative to hire 500 new Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms (ATF) agents and inspectors; fund over 1,000 new federal, state and local gun prosecutors; expand ATF's crime gun tracing and ballistics testing program; and help communities replicate successful gun violence reduction programs like Richmond's Project Exile and Boston's Operation Ceasefire.

**PRESIDENT CLINTON: CONVENING CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS
AND MAKING THE CASE FOR COMMON SENSE GUN LEGISLATION**

March 7, 2000

President Clinton today will announce the release of a new Justice Department report, *Kids and Guns*, showing the devastating impact that gun violence has on American children. The report shows that guns are the key variable in the rise or fall of juvenile homicide. The rise in murders of juveniles and by juveniles from the mid-1980's to their peak in 1993 was entirely firearms-related -- as was their subsequent decline since 1993. Non-gun juvenile homicide remained constant during that period. The report also makes clear that even with recent declines, too many American youth are killed by gunfire: the gun homicide rate of children under 15 is sixteen times higher in the U.S. than in 25 other industrialized nations.

In the wake of last week's tragic shootings, the President today will also convene a meeting with Congressional leaders to break the logjam on pending common sense gun legislation. The President will ask the leaders to put the safety of American families first, and pass measures to close the gun show loophole, require child safety locks for handguns, and ban the importation of large capacity ammunition clips. The President also will call on the leaders to pass his plan to punish adults who recklessly allow children to have access to deadly weapons.

RELEASING NEW REPORT ON KIDS AND GUNS. Today's report, prepared by the Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), contains encouraging news on recent declines in gun-related juvenile deaths, but reinforces the need to remain vigilant in keeping guns out of the hands of children. Key findings include:

- **The sharp decline in homicides by juveniles between 1994 and 1997 was attributable entirely to a decline in homicides with firearms.** This followed a 65 percent increase in homicides by juveniles from 1987 to the 1993 peak year -- also fueled entirely by firearms.
- **Guns are the weapon of choice for juvenile homicide offenders.** Between 1980 and 1997, 70 percent of juvenile homicide offender victims were killed with a firearm. Most victims of juvenile homicide offenders were male (83 percent). Of all victims killed by juveniles, 55 percent were acquaintances, 31 percent were strangers and 14 percent were family members.
- **Teen homicides more likely to involve a gun than adult homicides.** In 1997, 85 percent of 15-17 year-old homicide victims were killed with a gun, versus 60 percent of victims 35-44.

The findings of today's report only underscore the importance of this Administration's efforts to reduce gun violence, including the Brady Law, the 1994 assault weapons ban, the Youth Handgun Safety Act banning juvenile handgun possession, and the Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative to crack down on illegal gun traffickers who supply guns to youth. The report also reinforces the need for additional gun safety measures, like those proposed by the President, to prevent guns from getting into the wrong hands.

PUSHING CONGRESS TO PASS COMMON SENSE GUN LEGISLATION. For eight months, the Congress has failed to complete action on common sense gun measures in the

pending juvenile crime bill. Today the President will call on Congressional leaders to move quickly to enact into law the Senate-passed gun safety provisions to help keep guns out of the hands of children and criminals. The Senate gun provisions include:

- **Closing the gun show loophole.** The Senate bill contained provisions to close this dangerous loophole in the law that allows criminals to buy guns at gun shows on a cash and carry basis with no questions asked. It is estimated that up to half of sellers at the more than 4,000 gun shows held across the country are not subject to the same laws as licensed gun dealers – and are not required to conduct background checks or keep records to help law enforcement trace guns later used in crimes. To close this dangerous loophole, the President will insist on background checks and recordkeeping for all sales at gun shows.
- **Requiring child safety locks for handguns.** An estimated one-third of all privately-owned handguns are left loaded and unlocked. Child safety locks can reduce the unauthorized use of handguns by a child at play or a teen looking to commit a crime. The Senate passed an amendment to require a child safety lock with every new handgun.
- **Banning the importation of all large capacity ammunition magazines.** While the 1994 assault weapons law banned the future domestic manufacture and importation of large capacity ammunition feeding devices that hold more than 10 rounds, those manufactured before the law's enactment were grandfathered. Since it is difficult to determine when clips manufactured by foreign companies were made, it has become relatively easy for foreign gun manufacturers to circumvent the ban. The Senate bill would close this loophole by banning the importation of all large capacity magazines – regardless of when they were manufactured
- **Extending the Brady Law to violent juveniles.** Although violent youths convicted in adult courts are barred from owning firearms as adults, the same is not true for youths found guilty of serious violent crimes in juvenile court. The Senate bill would permanently ban all violent juveniles from buying guns.

HOLDING PARENTS RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILD ACCESS TO GUNS. The President will also call on the Congressional leaders to take a step beyond the Senate-passed provisions and pass his Child Access Prevention (CAP) proposal, which would hold adults accountable if they allow children easy access to loaded guns. Sixteen states have already adopted CAP laws. According to a study published by the Journal of the American Medical Association, CAP laws help reduce fatal unintentional shootings by an average of 23 percent. The President's proposed legislation would impose felony penalties on adults who knowingly or recklessly allow a child to have unlawful access to an unlocked gun that is later used to cause death or serious injury. Such adults could be imprisoned for up to three years, fined up to \$250,000, or both.

LEADING AN EFFORT TO DEVELOP SMART GUN TECHNOLOGY. The President has also proposed a \$10 million FY 2001 budget initiative to fund the research, development and replication of "smart gun" technologies. These state-of-the-art safety innovations would limit a gun's use to its proper adult owner – and could prevent accidental shooting deaths, deter gun theft, and stop criminals from seizing and using the guns of police officers against them.

**Handgun Licensing
Q&A
March 2, 2000**

Q: If the President supports registration, why isn't he submitting legislation on it?

A: As the President has said, he believes gun registration is a good idea. But he also believes that the best next step to strengthen our gun laws is a state-based licensing system to help ensure that handgun purchasers may legally possess firearms and can safely handle and store them. This will help law enforcement efforts to keep guns out of the wrong hands, and it can help prevent many accidental shootings. So, the President wants to focus now on making the case for licensing, and pressing the Congress to pass common sense gun provisions such as closing the gun show loophole, requiring child safety locks for handguns, and banning the importation of large capacity ammunition clips.

Q: This morning on the "Today Show", President Clinton said he wants to require all gun owners to have gun licenses. Isn't this really a form of registration? If not, what is the difference?

A: No. Licensing and registration are different proposals. Our licensing proposal would encourage states to create licensing systems that cover prospective purchases, not possession. These systems would ensure that all handgun buyers have passed a background check and know how to safely handle and store firearms. Registration, on the other hand, generally requires firearms owners to register all firearms in their possession with a central government authority. Registration also does not mandate any sort of safety requirement, as our licensing proposal would.

**Recent Shootings
Q&A
March 1, 2000**

Q: Mr. President, what have you done, and what can you do, when something like these recent shootings occur?

A: We all have a responsibility to do what we can to prevent these horrible tragedies from happening in the first place. Now, many of the details from both shootings are still unfolding, and of course, we may never know if any particular proposal could have prevented these tragedies. Still, I believe it is important to take common sense steps to keep guns out of the hands of children and criminals.

We know from experience that it can make a difference. My Administration took on the gun lobby and passed the Brady Law. This measure alone has stopped about half a million felons, fugitives, and domestic abusers from buying guns – saving an untold number of lives. We also took action to ban deadly assault weapons, and bar juveniles from owning handguns. As a result of these and other efforts to combat violence, crime is down for the seventh straight year, and since 1993, gun-related crime has dropped over 35 percent and the number of juvenile gun homicide offenders is down 57 percent.

But clearly, there is more we can do to keep guns out of the wrong hands. And it does appear that at least two of the Administration's proposals – requiring child safety locks for handguns and funding "smart gun" technology – might have helped make the tragedy in Michigan less likely had they been the law of the land.

The Senate-passed gun legislation from last summer contained my proposal to require child safety devices, such as safety locks or secure gun storage devices, to be sold with every new handgun. Child safety locks have been shown to be particularly effective in preventing younger children from operating handguns. My FY 2001 budget also provides \$10 million to fund "smart gun" technology, which can limit a gun's use to the proper adult owner – preventing unauthorized gun usage and accidents. I have also proposed Child Access Prevention legislation, which would impose criminal penalties on adults who knowingly or recklessly allow a child to have unlawful access to a gun that is later used to cause death or injury. Congress can and should make these provisions – along with others to close the gun show loophole and bar violent juveniles from owning guns for life – the law of the land without further delay.

It's true that no single law can offer a simple solution to this problem. But that is no excuse for inaction. All of us – parents, communities, the gun industry, members of Congress, my Administration – must do all we can to prevent further gun violence. And there is no good reason why Americans must wait any longer for Congress to enact reasonable gun legislation that can make our communities, schools, and workplaces safer.

Q: As a parent, how does the recent spate of violence make you feel? And what can you say to reassure parents that tragedies like these won't happen again?

A: As a parent – as an American – I feel a sense of outrage and sadness about these tragic incidents. No one should ever have to endure the pain that these families and communities have been put through during these last few days.

To parents, let me say first that we've been working on many fronts to help bring down gun violence – by strengthening enforcement of our gun laws, by offering legislation to close loopholes in those laws, by engaging communities in a campaign against youth violence. Now Congress should do its part by finally passing common sense gun measures like requiring child safety locks with every handgun and requiring background checks at gun shows. And I urge parents to do their part by being responsible about the ways they store firearms, to keep them out of the reach of children.

But it is important for parents to remember too that our schools are still very safe places, and that violent crime and gun crime has dropped significantly all across the country. Those of us in public life have an obligation to keep these facts in mind and not to be alarmist. I would say to parents that it is important to talk to your children, if they're old enough, about incidents like these. And reassure them that these are rare occurrences.

Q: What is the federal government doing in response to the shootings?

A: Michigan: We've asked the relevant agencies to work together and with local authorities to provide support to the Michigan community. Education and DOJ and HHS have offered crisis response services. DOJ has also offered investigative support: the FBI and U.S. Attorney have been in communication with local authorities. ATF has two agents on the ground and have traced the origins of the gun.

I spoke yesterday with Ira Rutherford, the Superintendent of Schools, and he has asked for assistance from the Department of Education. We have staff at the Department who, sadly, have some experience with such tragedies and they will work with the Superintendent to respond to his questions and to connect him with his counterparts in other communities that have been through school shootings.

Pennsylvania: Justice and Treasury have offered investigative support to the community of Wilkesburg. ATF is tracing the weapon involved in this incident as well.

Q: There have been attempts in Congress to strike a compromise on the gun legislation that passed as part of the Senate Juvenile Crime bill. Since the gun show provision is the most contentious issue, would you be willing to compromise and sign a bill that includes some, but not all, of your gun proposals?

A: Congress should send me the common sense measures passed by the Senate. We should do everything in our power to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children. As I have said before, passing common sense gun legislation is not about politics – it is about public safety.

I am not going to speculate on the particulars of a compromise bill that I haven't seen yet. But let me say this: there were press reports recently that Republicans in Congress were considering dropping all the gun safety provisions from the Juvenile Crime bill. You can be certain I will not sign a bill that fails to address the most pressing crime problem facing our youth today – gun violence. Each day, another dozen children are killed by gunfire. The tragic shooting deaths in the last two days are a painful reminder that we must do more to keep guns out of the wrong hands. This is no time for inaction. There is no reason why this Congress shouldn't pass meaningful gun safety legislation that can keep our families safer and save lives.

**Michigan School Shooting
Question and Answer
March 1, 2000**

Q: In response to yesterday's shooting in Michigan, the President called on the Congress to pass common sense gun legislation. Could any of your proposals have prevented or impacted yesterday's shooting?

A: Many of the details from yesterday's shooting are still unfolding (such as how the gun was obtained), and we may never know if any particular proposal could have prevented this tragedy. Still, we believe it is important to take common sense steps to keep guns out of the hands of children and criminals. And it does appear that at least two of the Administration's proposals -- requiring child safety locks and funding "smart gun" technology -- might have helped make yesterday's tragedy less likely had they been the law of the land.

The Senate-passed gun legislation from last summer contained an Administration proposal to require child safety devices, such as safety locks, or secure gun storage devices to be sold with every new handgun. Child safety locks have been shown to be particularly effective in preventing younger children from operating handguns. The President's FY 2001 budget also provides \$10 million to fund "smart gun" technology, which can limit a gun's use to the proper adult owner -- preventing unauthorized gun usage and accidents.

The Administration also proposed Child Access Prevention legislation in its omnibus gun bill last year, which would impose criminal penalties on adults who knowingly or recklessly allow a child to have unlawful access to a gun that is later used to cause death or injury. And the Senate last year passed provisions to increase penalties for transferring handguns to children and for the receipt of stolen guns. The President has repeatedly called on the Congress to make these provisions -- along with others to close the gun show loophole and bar violent juveniles from owning guns for life -- the law of the land without further delay.

It's true that no single law can offer a simple solution to this problem. But that is no excuse for inaction. The accidental gun death rate for children under 15 is, as the President has said, nine times higher than in the 25 other industrialized nations combined. All of us have a responsibility to do what we can to prevent further gun violence. And there is no good reason why American families must wait any longer for the Congress to enact reasonable gun legislation that can help make our communities, schools, and workplaces safer.

Q: What is the federal government doing in response to the shooting?

A: We've asked the relevant agencies to work together and with local authorities to provide support to the Michigan community. Education and DOJ have offered counseling support. DOJ has also offered investigative support: the FBI and U.S. Attorney had a conference call with local authorities yesterday. ATF has two agents on the ground working to trace the gun. HHS usually waits to be asked by the state mental health authority, but will make a courtesy call today. We are coordinating with these and other agencies today to keep updated.

PRESIDENT CLINTON PROPOSES STATE LICENSES FOR HANDGUN PURCHASES

January 27, 2000

In the State of the Union address tonight, President Clinton will propose a system of state-based licenses for handgun purchases. Under the proposal, every purchaser of a handgun must first have a valid state-issued photo license, showing that the buyer has passed a Brady background check and a gun safety training requirement. The President's proposal is part of a comprehensive strategy to keep guns out of the wrong hands and reduce gun violence and accidental shootings. The President also will highlight recent proposals to launch the largest gun enforcement initiative ever and fund the development of "smart gun" technology that can limit a gun's use to its authorized owner. Finally, he will call again on Congress to pass common-sense gun measures.

A STATE-BASED LICENSING SYSTEM FOR HANDGUN PURCHASES. President Clinton tonight will propose a state-based licensing system that would apply to all handgun purchases. Individuals seeking to buy a handgun would be required to obtain a photo license from their state of residence, and to present the license when they purchase a handgun. States would issue a license only if the applicant has: (1) passed a Brady background check; and (2) shown proof of having completed a certified safety course or exam. Under the President's proposal, state participation would be optional, not mandated. For states that choose not to participate, federally-approved gun dealers or a federal entity would be authorized to issue licenses, in an arrangement comparable to the current Brady check system.

KEEPING CRIMINALS, FUGITIVES, AND OTHER PROHIBITED PERSONS FROM BUYING HANDGUNS. Under the President's proposal, each state licensing authority would regularly cross-check criminal history and other available records to identify license holders who, since obtaining a license, have become prohibited from possessing firearms. Prohibited persons (felons, for instance) would then lose their licenses and their firearms.

PREVENTING ACCIDENTAL SHOOTINGS AND UNAUTHORIZED GUN USE. A recent survey has shown that a third of all handgun owners leave their guns loaded and unlocked. Moreover, the accidental gun death rate of children under 15 in the United States is nine times higher than in 25 other industrialized nations combined. Under the President's plan, applicants for a handgun license would be required to complete a certified firearms safety course or exam. States or certified private entities would administer these safety courses.

HIGHLIGHTING OTHER INITIATIVES ON FIREARMS ENFORCEMENT AND SMART GUN TECHNOLOGY. The President tonight will also describe his proposal for the largest gun enforcement initiative in history. This \$280 million initiative includes: 1) 500 new ATF agents and inspectors; 2) over 1,000 new federal, state and local gun prosecutors; 3) comprehensive crime gun tracing; 4) funding increases for ballistics testing; and 5) local media campaigns. President Clinton will also call on Congress to support research in "smart gun" technologies that can limit a gun's use to its authorized owner. The President's budget provides \$10 million to fund such research. Finally, the President will emphasize again that it is long past time for Congress to pass common-sense gun measures to close the gun show loophole, ban the importation of high-capacity ammunition clips and require child safety locks.

January 21, 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Bruce Reed
Eric Liu

SUBJECT: Gun Licensing Proposal

Overview

This memo briefly describes the gun licensing proposal for the State of the Union. The policy, which is similar to the Vice President's, would require every purchaser of a new handgun to have a valid state-issued photo license. To get a license, one would have to pass a Brady background check and a safety training requirement. This policy would further the cause of both gun enforcement and gun safety, within limits: it applies only to handguns, only to new guns (not used), and only to purchases (not possession). We plan to include this proposal in the State of the Union and submit legislation later in the year.

Policy Description

This proposal builds on the broad acceptance of hunting and driver's licenses by creating a state-based licensing system for all handgun purchases. All handgun purchasers would be required to obtain a photo license from their state of residence, and to present this license whenever they purchase handguns from licensed and unlicensed sellers. Sales from licensed dealers would, of course, continue to require Brady background checks.

Under the proposed system, states would issue a license only if the applicant has: 1) passed a Brady background check; and 2) shown proof of having completed a certified safety course or exam. In order to pass constitutional muster, this plan would cover some of the states' initial costs, after which time it would condition certain law enforcement grant funds upon a state's participation. In states that choose not to implement licensing, federally-approved gun dealers or a federal entity like the FBI would be authorized to issue licenses. The use of carrots and sticks to encourage participation, and a federal fallback for non-participating states, closely tracks the Brady check system. (If enacted, this licensing system could require funds for implementation, which we did not request in your FY 2001 budget).

Each licensing authority would also periodically check the National Instant Check System to identify persons who, since obtaining a license, have been prohibited from possessing firearms. Prohibited persons (felons, for instance) would be notified that their license was revoked and required to surrender their firearms.

**Handgun Licensing
Questions and Answers
January 27, 2000**

Q: Wasn't the Brady Law struck down by the Supreme Court under a scheme similar to this? Isn't your proposal unconstitutional?

A: No. The original Brady law was ruled unconstitutional because it mandated state and local law enforcement to conduct background checks on handgun purchasers until the National Instant Check System (NICS) took effect. Under our licensing proposal, state participation would be optional, not mandatory. For states that choose not to adopt a licensing system, federally-approved gun dealers or a federal entity (like the FBI) would be authorized to issue licenses. This is comparable to the way the revised Brady NICS system now operates.

Q: Are you planning to send legislation to Congress for this proposal?

A: What the President outlined tonight are the broad principles of a plan. These principles are that: 1) licensing should be state-based and a state option; 2) to get a license, a handgun purchaser must first pass a Brady background check and a gun safety requirement. We hope to work with the Congress and others to move this plan forward and to develop its details.

Q: How much will this proposal cost? And is it funded in the budget?

A: The ultimate program costs will depend on many variables: for instance, a dozen states already have some form of licensing in place, and that could significantly reduce the funding needed for what is otherwise a new program. The budget does not contain funds specifically for this proposal.

Q: Under your proposal, would showing a gun license substitute for a Brady background check at a gun store?

A: Absolutely not. This proposal would supplement and not replace Brady background checks, which would still be required for sales at federally-licensed gun dealers. In addition, under the President's proposal, each state licensing authority would regularly cross-check criminal history and other available records to identify license holders who, since obtaining a license, have become prohibited from possessing firearms. Prohibited persons (felons, for instance) would then lose their licenses and their firearms.

Q: How do you know criminals won't just produce fake licenses?

A: As with other forms of identification, states have an interest in producing licenses that are difficult to counterfeit. And while no identification is absolutely foolproof, requiring handgun purchasers to produce a handgun license before they are able to buy a gun will

greatly improve upon our current system, which allows criminals to buy firearms from private sellers with no ID, no background check, and no questions asked.

Q: How would you know if private sellers would actually require buyers to show a license? How would you enforce this?

A: One way this licensing plan could work would be to include penalties for sellers or buyers who fail to abide by the license requirement. That is one of the issues we hope to work with Congress and others in determining. But in general, we believe that like the Brady law, our proposal will be another useful tool to keep guns out of the wrong hands.

Q: Is this registration? What is the difference between licensing and registration?

A: No, this is not registration. Registration generally requires firearms owners to register all firearms in their possession with a central government authority. Our licensing proposal would encourage states to create licensing systems that cover prospective sales, not possession, to ensure that all handgun purchasers are legally eligible to possess firearms and know how to safely handle and store them.

Q: Why didn't you embrace handgun registration instead of licensing?

A: The President has stated previously that he believes gun registration is a good idea. But he also believes that the best next step to strengthen our gun laws is a state-based licensing system to help ensure that handgun purchasers may legally possess firearms and can safely handle and store them. This will help law enforcement efforts to keep guns out of the wrong hands, and it can help prevent many accidental shootings.

Q: Aren't you doing this just to support the Vice President's proposal?

A: The President and Vice President have worked together for seven years to reduce gun violence in this country. It is no surprise that they both agree that licensing will help strengthen our nation's gun laws. And they both agree that Congress must enact long-overdue gun measures to close the gun show loophole and require child safety locks.

Q: How many states now have licensing systems?

A: We are aware of at least 12 states that already have some form of a gun licensing system: CT, HI, IL, IA, MA, MI, MN, MO, NE, NJ, NY and NC.

February 18, 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Bruce Reed
Eric Liu

SUBJECT: DPC Weekly Report

1. Crime – Gun Shows. Following on your comments at this week's press conference, we wanted to provide more detailed information on gun show background checks. As you know, opponents of your gun show proposal want to weaken the Brady provision that gives law enforcement up to three business days to complete background checks for firearms sales. They have mischaracterized this *time limit* as a *waiting period* to create the impression that sales at a gun show could never be completed before the show closed. They claim that this "waiting period" inconveniences firearms purchasers at gun shows and could put gun shows out of business. Their argument, however, is a red herring: first, there is simply no federal minimum waiting period for firearms sales; and second, the vast majority of checks are completed within hours, not days. In fact, the FBI completes 77 percent of all background checks within 30 seconds and 95 percent within two hours. The remaining 5 percent of purchasers are nearly 20 times more likely to be felons or other prohibited purchasers, creating a powerful law enforcement rationale for the three-day time limit. (It is true that in separate legislation, you have proposed a three-day waiting period for handgun sales, but this provision is not a part of the gun show bill).

2. Youth Violence – National Campaign Board Call. On Tuesday, you will participate in a conference call with newly-appointed board members of the National Campaign Against Youth Violence (a separate briefing memo will provide more detail). We will formally announce the board in a press release Wednesday. It includes Steve Case of America Online, Senator Dole, Henry Cisneros, Dick Parsons of Time Warner, Bob Iger of Disney, Gerry Laybourne of Oxygen Media, and Deborah Prowther-Stith of Harvard University. The National Campaign is developing a national media campaign, as well as a city-by-city initiative that will be launched in Memphis on April 14th. This will be followed by a week of National Campaign events culminating on the anniversary of Columbine April 20th. After Wednesday's call, Jeff Bleich will hold regional board meetings in Washington, New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

3. Health Care – Medicare Update. On Thursday, the Senate Finance Committee will hold the first of several hearings on Medicare reform and modernization. Roth and Moynihan are trying to craft consensus on initiatives to restructure the program and to add a prescription drug benefit. Senior Administration officials were not invited to participate, but we are briefing GAO Comptroller General Walker, who will be testifying, to ensure he fully understands the extent of our proposed reforms and the need for additional financing to extend Medicare solvency. We will brief other likely witnesses as well, to help ensure that our proposal gets the most favorable reception it can from an unpredictable committee.



Anna Richter

03/03/2000 10:09:36 AM

Record Type: Record

To: Anna Richter/OPD/EOP@EOP

cc:

Subject: LAPIERRE INTERVIEW ON TODAY SHOW

NBC TODAY SHOW

MARCH 3, 2000

SPEAKERS: WAYNE LAPIERRE, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, NATIONAL
RIFLE ASSOCIATION
KATIE COURIC, ANCHOR

COURIC: Yesterday on this program, President Clinton said the biggest stumbling block to curbing gun violence in this country is the National Rifle association. Wayne LaPierre is the NRA's executive director.

Mr. LaPierre, welcome. Nice to see you.

LAPIERRE: Thank you, Katie, good to be with you.

COURIC: Let me start by asking you, first off, your reaction to the two tragic shootings in this country we witnessed this week.

LAPIERRE: Well, they were horrible incidents.

I mean--unfortunately, what I didn't hear the president talk about, though, is parenting in that case in Michigan. I mean, that's what the American public's talking about. Somehow the president drew a lesson that this is about gun control.

I mean, here you have a crack house, you have illegal contraband, stolen guns, 40 to 50 drug sales a day going on, and somehow the president's answer is to have the federal government show up and knock on the door and deliver a safety lock. I mean, we're for safety locks. But this was about parental negligence and the horrible conditions that little boy lived in.

COURIC: You don't think it had anything to do with the easy accessibility of guns, stolen or otherwise?

LAPIERRE: No. I think it had everything to do with the fact that we need to take those crack houses and we need to put those people in jail. We need to get every drug dealer with a gun off the streets of America. We need to get felons with guns off the street.

Police all over this country know right now that when they catch a felon with a gun, a drug dealer with a gun, they call the Department of Justice, and they say, will you prosecute the case? It falls into a black hole.

We could dramatically cut violence overnight all over this country if we could take the Richman (ph) program, which is 100 percent prosecution, enforcement of the existing laws, and put it in every major American city. And that's what the NRA's for.

COURIC: This 19-year-old, who was a friend of this little boy's uncle, has been charged with involuntary manslaughter. He could serve a 15-year prison sentence because he left a gun under a blanket in that home. Do you have a problem with his being charged with that?

LAPIERRE: We have always felt--and I feel that owning a gun is a responsibility. And the fact if you have young children in the house, you better lock up your guns and you better make them inaccessible. And if you're criminally negligent, you should be charged and we support that.

COURIC: You have no problems, also, with trigger locks. I just want to clarify that.

LAPIERRE: No. In fact, we've supported trigger locks for years. We teach them every day. We have 40,000 instructors around the country.

When people talk gun safety, they're talking about the NRA. That's what we do every day. We spent \$20 million on our Eddie Eagle (ph) program.

COURIC: Well, Let's hear what the president had to say and we'll get your reaction.

LAPIERRE: OK.

(BEGIN AUDIO CLIP)

WILLIAM J. CLINTON, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: They're basically against anything that requires anybody to do anything as a member of society that helps to make us safer.

(END AUDIO CLIP)

LAPIERRE: Yes, I thought that was outrageous.

I mean, what happened in Congress last year is, the president didn't get everything exactly the way he wanted it, so he had his supporters vote against the bill that provided safety locks, vote against the bill that provided instant checks at gun shows, and vote against the bill that provided juvenile Brady. Because he didn't get exactly everything he wanted.

He was the one that was uncompromising and wanted an issue, as opposed to the NRA. The NRA supported those provisions.

COURIC: What about the juvenile justice bill that currently is stalled in Congress, which will require things like safety locks on guns--which you have no problem with--which would ban the import of large capacity ammunition and require background checks before buying a weapon at a gun show? why has it been stalled? what is the so-called stranglehold, according to the president, the NRA has over various Congressional leaders?

LAPIERRE: Well, you know, I had to smile when I heard him say that, because the logjam was the president. The fact is, the Republicans, along with key Democrats like John Dingell, offered the president a bill that had safety locks, every sale provided A safety lock, had checks on all sales at gun shows, had juvenile Brady, and the president, because he wanted more or for some reason, had his people vote all that stuff down. It wasn't the NRA; it was the president's people that killed that bill.

COURIC: What do you think about licensing guns? I know you came out against it when the president first proposed it. What's wrong with that? We have to license our automobiles. Why not license deadly weapons?

LAPIERRE: We have a Second Amendment freedom in this country under the Bill of Rights. The fact is if the government would provide--would say--the fact that the federal government would say, hey, wait a minute, before you can exercise a right in the Bill of Rights, we're going to have to deem you qualified, and we're going to parcel it out to who we judge worthy, I think is very chilling.

I mean, what if they did that for freedom of speech? What if they did that for freedom of religion?

The fact is that criminals won't get the licenses. There's already a Supreme Court decision, the Hanes (ph) case, that says that it's in violation of their Fifth Amendment rights to require a criminal to get a license or require them to register their guns.

What we ought to be doing is enforce the laws on the books. When you catch a felon with a gun, put him in jail; a violent juvenile with a gun, put him in jail; a drug dealer with a jail--a drug dealer with a gun, put him in jail. We're not doing that. We prosecuted in D.C. two people all last year under the existing federal gun laws. We only prosecuted 14 people in the entire state of New Jersey. We can be safe...

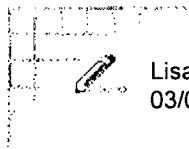
COURIC: The bottom line, Mr. LaPierre, 13 children die because of guns every day in this country, and the U.S. has a higher child gun-death rate than the next 24 biggest countries combined. Doesn't that seem to speak for itself and say more restrictions are sorely needed here?

LAPIERRE: We have--the NRA has a child accident rate of the lowest level in U.S. history. Now it's 130, but it's the lowest it's ever been, and that's because of our programs. Those 13 deaths a day the president's talking about, they're not children, they're violent juvenile street criminals, 15, 16, 17, 18. It's not a safety issue, it's a prosecution issue, and that's what the president won't do.

COURIC: All right, Wayne LaPierre, executive director of the NRA, thanks for coming in.

LAPIERRE: Thank you, Katie.

END



Lisa Ferdinando
03/02/2000 11:02:09 AM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

cc:

Subject: President Clinton on NBC Today Show, March 2, 2000

NBC TODAY SHOW
MARCH 2, 2000

SPEAKERS: WILLIAM J. CLINTON, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.
KATIE COURIC, ANCHOR

COURIC: On "Close Up," the president of the United States. We wanted to talk with him about this week's shootings. President Clinton joins us now live from the Roosevelt Room in the White House.

Mr. President, thank you so much for joining us.

CLINTON: Good morning, Katie.

COURIC: Good morning.

Let me ask you, first of all, when you heard the story of a 6-year-old boy in Michigan, a first grader, bringing a gun to school and shooting to death his 6-year-old classmate, what was your reaction?

CLINTON: Well, first, I think I had a normal, human reaction. I didn't respond as president. I was just--as a parent I was heartbroken. And then I was angry. I thought, you know, how did this child get the gun in the first place? What's a 6-year-old doing with a gun?

COURIC: When something like this happens, politicians often jump on it as an excuse for more gun control. But I know that, Mr. President, you're very proud of pointing out that gun deaths have dropped to their lowest levels in more than 30 years in this country. So should we view this more as a tragedy than a reason to call for more gun control?

CLINTON: Well, it's both. The gun death rate has dropped to its lowest point in 30 years, but it's still by far the highest of any advanced nation in the world.

And if we had passed the child trigger-lock provision and we applied it to all new guns, then at least those guns would not be used by 6-year-olds to kill other 6-year-olds. I think that's very important. And that's a part of this bill which also closes the gun show loophole and the background check law, bans the import of large ammunition clips, that the Congress has had for eight months now, with no action.

So I am--I'm going to call the leaders of both parties in both houses and ask them to come down here and break the logjam. There's been a House version and a Senate version of this bill for eight months and they have done nothing. Meanwhile, 13 kids every day, every single day, there are 13 children who die from guns in this country. So I do think we need more legislation.

COURIC: Why is it locked in committee? Why has it been stalemated? And when would you like them to come to the White House?

CLINTON: Well, I think it's been locked because the Senate--the vice president cast a tie-breaking vote in the Senate so we got a tough bill, despite fierce lobbying against it by the NRA, and the two houses can't resolve their differences. But maybe this tragic death will help.

I mean, we need these child trigger-locks on new handguns. That will begin to make a big difference.

And then, in this year's budget, I've asked them to fund some more research into smart gun technology, which would enable us to have guns that could only be fired by the adults who own them. That also would be a big advance.

We had--one of the things that's being debated in Michigan is whether there should be parental accountability provisions. We had provisions in our law for that so that all states would have these laws. Several do; but most don't. And those were taken out. So maybe they'll be revisited in the conference, as well.

The main thing is, when you just get the child trigger-locks and fund investment in smart-gun technology, I think we'll be a long way down the road.

And of course, I think ultimately what we ought to do is license handgun owners the way we license people who drive cars. I think that is the critical next step. And I hope that we will consider that as well.

CLINTON: This guy stole the gun, apparently. That's the allegation--in the house where the child took it.

But it would clearly make a big difference in the future to people's lives.

COURIC: Let me deal with some of those issues you just raised, Mr. President. What about registering guns? All Americans are required to register their cars. Why not require them to register guns?

CLINTON: Well, you could do that. But the problem is, there are over 200 million guns out there. Some say 250 million guns out there now. And most of the experts with whom I talked before I made my proposal believed that if we required all handgun owners to be licensed, we could achieve the same results. That is, whether you've got an old gun or you're buying a new gun, if people could come in when they do get new guns and get a license, then I believe we'd have the same result.

I'm not sure practically that we could get all the guns registered in this country because there's so many out there already. So I'd like to begin with that.

You know, keep in mind, all those kids died at Columbine, and when I fought for the Brady bill--which has kept a half a million felons, fugitives and stalkers from getting guns--and the assault weapons ban, about somewhere between eight and 12 members of Congress were defeated in the next election by the NRA because they voted for that.

And then when all those kids were killed at Columbine, I thought, surely we can close the gun show loophole, have the child safety locks and maybe have the parental responsibility provisions and ban ammunition clips, and those bills have been just lingering up interest for eight months.

I don't think most Americans have any idea what a stranglehold the NRA has had on this Congress. And the people in our party have taken the lead with a few brave Republicans in trying to fight for sensible legislation. But we need the public aroused on this. We need the public to be heard.

I would not be opposed to registering guns, as well, but I just want you to understand there are practical problems with that. And you get most of the benefit if you license the gun owners. So I would like to see a start with that.

COURIC: When it comes to licensing, Mr. President, Wayne LaPierre, as you know is the executive vice president of the NRA, said, quote: Criminals aren't going to stand in line to get their photos taken. They're not going to stand in line--stand, rather--for licenses. You're walking way out on a limb.

CLINTON: Well, you could say that about people with automobile licenses, too. But when people don't have gun licenses and they're found with guns and they're in violation of a law for that, very often you can get them before they commit a crime.

If the facts as they've been reported are true about the tragic circumstances in which this 6-year-old boy lived and had the even more tragic consequence of killing that totally innocent young girl, this man apparently stole that gun. But the point is, he could never get a license to carry a handgun.

COURIC: But meanwhile, is it practically possible to check every gun owner in America to see if he or she is carrying a license?

CLINTON: Well, none of these things will happen instantaneously overnight. But yet they will begin to make a difference.

Look, when we passed the Brady bill, Katie, let me remind you, people said, well, this won't make any difference because criminals don't get their guns at gun stores. Turned out a lot of them did. It turned out we were able to deny 500,000 people who were trying to buy handguns the right to do so because they were felons, fugitives or stalkers.

CLINTON: Now there are a lot of kids alive and there are a lot of adults alive in America

because we did that.

Now a lot of them are using the gun shows or these urban flea markets. If we close that loophole, do the background check there, license new handgun--license, excuse me, handgun owners, and put safety locks, these trigger locks, on the guns to protect the kids, and then the next big step is to technologically develop guns that can only be fired by their lawful owners, we can turn this situation around.

But, you know, like I said, we've got over 200 million guns out there. We're losing 13 kids a day. The accidental rate of children--that's another thing I'd like the American people to think about. The rate of kids being killed by accident with guns is nine times higher in America than that of the next big--24 biggest countries combined. . So we have not done nearly enough.

And we need to identify these things and just systematically go do them. None of them interfere with the right of any lawful citizen to hunt or to engage in sports shooting. And it is an unbelievable thing, after what we saw clearly at Columbine and all the problems that were there, that eight months have gone by and the Congress can't act. And the reason they can't act is because the heat the NRA has put on them.

COURIC: Mr. President, why haven't you publicly asked gun manufacturers to produce these so-called smart guns voluntarily?

CLINTON: Oh, I have. We've worked--and let me say, we're getting some support from responsible gun manufacturers. Many of them have already said they want to put the child safety locks on their new guns. Many of them are engaged in this technology.

But what I want to do is to have the government also fund some of the research just as we funded the initial research that led to the Internet, just as we fund the initial research that is leading to the secrecy (ph) of the human genome.

A lot of this basic research to solve big national problems often starts with government funding. So I'd like to see the government do its part.

But I have asked the gun manufacturers to do so, and some of the responsible manufacturers have already said, yes, we're going to go with the child safety locks. And we want this smart gun technology. I just think we ought to get there as quickly as we can, which is why I want the government to invest, as well.

COURIC: All the presidential candidates seem to agree on this point, so you would think it could be accomplished. What is the NRA's biggest beef, in your estimation, about the technology that would enable only the person who owns the gun to actually fires it?

CLINTON: Well, first of all, I don't think that's accurate that all the presidential candidates do.

COURIC: Well, George W. Bush favors trigger locks, I understand. I understand John McCain...

CLINTON: This morning.

COURIC: Pardon?

CLINTON: This morning. But Senator McCain voted against the Brady bill.

COURIC: But he says he favors technology that would enable the gun user to wear a special bracelet. He said that last night.

CLINTON: Yes, but they were against the Brady bill, they're against extending--closing the gun show loophole, they're against the licensing of handgun owners.

Now, you know, but nobody could be against technology. So I hope that we can get 100 percent of the Congress to at least vote for the research and the new technology.

COURIC: What is the NRA's biggest beef about smart guns?

CLINTON: I don't know that they'll be against smart guns. But they're basically against anything that requires anybody to do anything as a member of society that helps to make it safer. That is, if they were making this argument on car licensing or licensing of car drivers, they would say that everybody has an individual right to drive a car and therefore no lawful car owner should be required to undergo the terrible burden of getting a car license, because there are some people who are irresponsible and shouldn't be driving cars.

That's the essential argument they're making. They're saying guns are special, guns are different than cars, and the rights of individual citizens are far, far more important than the safety of society as a whole. That's their argument. And I just disagree with them.

COURIC: An NRA spokesman actually told us last night that this isn't about making guns safer, it's about prosecuting criminals, and that your Justice Department hasn't done enough in that area.

CLINTON: Well, we've increased gun prosecution since I've been here and we have a lot of people in jail for it.

All I can tell you is we have a higher percentage of people in jail than all the other advanced countries. And they have a lower gun death rate. Why is that? That's because they don't have an NRA in their country and they take sensible steps to protect children and society as a whole from people having guns who shouldn't have them, doing things they shouldn't do with them.

You've got to keep guns away from criminals and children if you want to save society.

And, look, if the NRA were arguing years ago in this vein, they'd be against airport metal detectors, because, after all, everybody--most people that go through airport metal detectors are innocent. Why should we burden them with having to go through and empty their pockets and take out their money clips and all that because there's just a few criminals around? You know, you're interfering with their individual rights to walk on an airplane. I mean, that's the argument they make. You shouldn't burden an individual law-abiding handgun owner because most of them are lawful, just because there are a few criminals.

But the point is, that society takes steps with speed limits, with licensing laws, with airport metal detectors, and any number of others ways where we all make a little bit of sacrifice and time and effort to comply with a system that makes us all freer. And we still get to do our lawful activity. So I just think they're wrong about that.

They're saying that guns are different, guns are different than cars, guns are different than any other area of our national life where we seek for common safety. We protect ourselves from the people who would abuse our liberty, abuse our freedom and abuse our safety. And I just think they're wrong about this.

And I hope that a majority of the Congress will agree. And I hope that more and more members of the Republican Party will agree.

As I say, we have had some few, brave members of the Republican Party that have joined the vast majority of Democrats in trying to responsibly deal with this without in any way undermining the right of people to do legitimate hunting or sports shooting activities. And we can do this. We can make America a lot safer.

COURIC: Mr. President, before we go, in closing, when do you plan to invite congressional leaders to the White House to discuss the juvenile justice bill?

CLINTON: Well, I'd like them to come down next week as soon as we can set it up because we're running out of time. We need to get out of this terrible logjam. And I hope that these tragedies will give a little impulse, a profound sense of obligation, to do that.

Again, as I say, nobody's trying to interfere with individual rights here. What we're trying to do is to promote the common safety of the American people. And we're not nearly safe enough. All you've got to do is look at these incidents. Can we eliminate every problem? no. Is there a silver bullet that will solve it overnight? No. Can we save a lot of lives, including a lot of children, 13 every day, 13 funerals a day? You bet we can and we ought to.

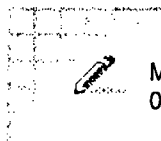
COURIC: Mr. President, again, thank you very, very much for spending some time with us this morning.

CLINTON: Thank you, Katie.

COURIC: We really appreciate it.

END

Message Sent To: _____



Margaret M. Suntum
03/02/2000 05:14:40 PM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

cc:

Subject: Embargoed transcript: Dan Rather interview of the President EMBARGOED UNTIL 6:30 P.M.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

Embargoed For Release
Until 6:30 P.M. EST
March 2, 2000

INTERVIEW OF THE PRESIDENT
BY DAN RATHER OF CBS

The Roosevelt Room

4:06 P.M. EST

Q Mr. President, thank you for doing this. You're proposing registering guns like cars. But if you're going to do that, then why not take the next step and regulate guns, as we do cars? After all, if there's something seriously wrong about cars, the government can regulate automobiles. Are you willing to do that?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, I don't think we should minimize the impact that licensing handgun owners themselves would have. That's what I want to do. And I think it's a very important step. Now, it's tough to pass in this Congress because most of the Republicans agree with the NRA that guns are different, and even though it might save lives, we shouldn't do it. But I think it's very important.

There's a practical problem with the guns, of course. There are over 200 million of them already out there. But I think if we would begin the process of making handgun owners get a license before they can buy a gun, pass a Brady background check, and then have a gun safety course, I think it would make a difference.

I think if we did that, plus had child safety locks, closed the big loophole in the background registration law by covering the gun shows and the urban flea markets, and then continue this technology into safe guns so that as soon as possible we can sell guns and adjust them so that, by fingerprints, they can only be fired by the adults who own them, all these things together would make our country a much safer place. And I'm going to continue to fight for it.

We need to start by passing this legislation that the Congress has had for eight months now. The Senate passed a pretty strong law, with the Vice President casting the tie-breaking vote; the House passed a much weaker law. And they've just been sitting on this for eight months. I hope that these last two tragic days will finally move the Congress to act. And I'm going to meet with the leading conferees on the two bills in the next few days to try to do that.

Q But you're not prepared to take the step to try to regulate guns?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that the most important thing we can do now is to pass the legislation before the Congress, and then try to pass legislation that would require the owners themselves, people who want to buy handguns, to be licenses, just as car drivers are. I think that's the next big step and I think it will make a big difference.

Just with the Brady Bill and the assault weapons ban and the more police on the street, we've got the murder rate down to a 30-year low. But it's still way too high. And the accidental death rate from children is astronomical. It's nine times higher than the next 24 industrial nations combined. So we've got to do more with this. And I want to focus on this agenda. I think it will drive the death rate down from guns both for murders and from accidental death rates.

Q Mr. President, how, if in any way, would your new proposals have prevented or even helped to prevent the shooting of this six-year-old girl in Michigan?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think -- there are two things I'd like to mention. One is something that is still in the bill. If this gun had a child trigger lock on it, then the child, in all probability could not have figured out how to undo the child trigger lock and fire the gun. So that's very, very important.

Then I had a provision which neither the Senate, nor

the House passed, to make national a law that today I think fewer than 20 states have, which would hold adults responsible for the kinds of activities that this young boy tragically engaged in when he killed that little girl. I think that it ought to be national, not just in a few states.

And so I hope the Congress, and maybe the conference, will reconsider that, even though even the Senate wouldn't pass that. They ought to take a look at this now, because clearly the adults bear the primary responsibility here. And people would think twice before just leaving a gun hanging around the house that a kid could walk off with if that were the case.

Q Mr. President, there are so many questions about this issue that run so deep in the American character, as well as our history. With, as you've mentioned, at least 200 million guns out there, what about the argument that says, listen, there's really no chance that we're going to have meaningful gun control in this country unless you go out and get those guns back, and that's simply not practical?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think, first of all, you never want to make the perfect the enemy of the good. Look how much good the Brady Bill has done. It's kept a half-million felons, fugitives and stalkers from getting handguns. And that's one of the reasons that the murder rate is at a 30-year low. So it won't solve all the problems, but it will solve some.

Secondly, especially if we could license people when they come into buy handguns, we could then couple that with a very aggressive gun buy-back program. Keep in mind, yes, there are more than 200 million guns out there, but a lot of them are in the hands of collectors and not regularly in use. What we need to do is to get these cheap guns off the streets, and with an aggressive gun buy-back program we could do that. Just with the few million dollars we spend on it every year, we get a huge number of guns, offering about \$50 a gun.

So I would also like to see that program expanded. If you could get a lot of the older guns that are just out there floating loose off the street, if you could license the handgun owners, if you could have child safety locks, and then if we could proceed with this safe gun technology so that in the future all the guns that were sold could only be fired by the adults who are their rightful owner, I think you'd go a long, long way toward making this a much, much safer country.

And it wouldn't in any way infringe on the rights of hunters and sport shooters, except to ask them to do what the rest of us do when we go through airport metal detectors or get driver's licenses. We undergo a little bit of inconvenience so that society as a whole would be a lot safer. And I think we have neglected this far too long.

As I said, there's not enough urgency in the Congress. You've got a dozen kids a day still getting shot to death out there. And this bill has been up there for eight months. So this is one place where I think the United States Congress is completely out of touch with the American people, largely because of the genuine fear people have of the organized NRA interest back in their district. And they just no longer reflect the views of the majority of the people.

I had a woman tell me yesterday when I was touring a high-tech facility in northern Virginia that her husband was a Republican and an avid hunter, who strongly supported these initiatives. And I think that's where the American people are. It's time for Congress to get in step with the American people and take these actions that will make our children safer.

Q Is it, or is it not, your contention, Mr. President, the basic problem has been the Republican-led Congress?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, absolutely. Now, we have some Democrats who live in rural districts where there are a lot of hunters and where they're afraid of this because when I passed the assault weapons ban and the Brady Bill, back in '93 and '94, there's no question that the NRA beat about a dozen of our members. There's no question they did. These people who voted with us to make our streets safer and save lives gave up their seats in Congress.

But public opinion has shifted a lot since then. And this is primarily a problem of the leadership in the Republican Congress being unwilling to part from the NRA. And I hope that they will do it now, because I think a lot of their members want to. And almost all these members of Congress could vote for this legislation and not be threatened at all, and they need to do that.

Q When I talk to the Republican leadership in Congress, they -- and I will say, somewhat gleefully, say, look, there are at least 60 Democrats in the House who, no way, no how, are going to vote for any additional gun control legislation.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that leaves us with about 140 on our side, which means they only have to produce 80 for us to have a majority. So they ought to do that. There's 80 Republicans who come from suburban districts where their constituents strongly support this, and where they would not be defeated by the NRA if they went with us.

Q You've mentioned the NRA several times. Everybody knows the National Rifle Association pours a lot of money into a lot of campaigns to beat just this kind of legislation that you have proposed. But is it, or is it not, reality that what you have are tens of millions of Americans who own guns, and whatever

their party affiliation, however they feel about you, are just adamant about not controlling guns any further, and that's the real problem?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it is, but most of them -- a lot of gun owners -- keep in mind, I'm convinced a majority of hunters and sport shooters, once they understand that these regulations do not in any way, shape or form, impact their ability to conduct their lawful affairs, will support what amounts to a minor inconvenience -- doing a background check at a gun show, for example, having a child safety lock on a handgun -- to save lives.

And I'll say again, I know public opinion has changed. In New Hampshire, we lost a Democratic congressman who voted for the assault weapons ban and the Brady Bill. He lost his job in '94. And I went up there in '96 and met with a bunch of people who were hunters and sportsmen, and I said, now, the NRA told you we were going to take your guns away and inconvenience you. And I said, if you missed a day in a dear season, I want you to vote against me, too. But if you didn't, they didn't tell you the truth and you need to stick with us. And we won, and won handily there.

So I think people are changing as they understand this is simply common sense safety measures, and as a society, we all undergo minor inconveniences so that our children can grow up safe. And it's ridiculous -- the United States is the only country in the world that would allow this kind of, I believe, recklessness with the public interest. Nobody else does it, and that's why we have the highest murder rate and the highest accidental gun death rate of children -- because we don't take these common-sense measures.

I think we ought to make this a safer country. And we can do it, I'll say again, without interfering with people's right to hunting and sport shooting.

Q Mr. President, I know you have a meeting to go to. You've been very generous with your time. A last question. So many people, when I talk to them, they say, look, it's fine for the President to talk this way, but he's going to see rocks grow and water run uphill before he sees any real gun control legislation. Now, you've made it clear you don't believe that. What can you do to move this along? Can you call the members of Congress to the White House for a special meeting to compromise? What can you do?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Well, I'm going to bring down the leaders of the House and the Senate, the Republicans and Democrats, who are in charge of this bill in the conference. The House and the Senate version are in a conference; they're supposed to come up with a unified bill and let the House and Senate vote on it. And I don't have any doubt if they report out

a good bill it will pass. And I'm going to do everything I can to pass it.

I don't believe that. They said -- once they said we'd see water run uphill before we had Brady background checks. And then before we banned assault weapons. And then before we banned these large-capacity ammunition clips. We did all that, but we left some loopholes in the law that we ought to close. We ought to require child safety locks. We ought to invest in safe gun technology. And we ought to license handgun owners.

You know, every significant reform in a controversial area is considered to be impossible when you start. But you just start and you keep working and you keep working and you keep working, and eventually it happens.

Q Mr. President, thank you. I'd love to come by sometime and talk to you about Colombia and China and Taiwan. But I appreciate you taking time today to do this. Thank you very much.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Dan.

Q Mr. President, I really appreciate you taking time to do this. Great. Thanks a lot. Tell the First Lady hello for us.

THE PRESIDENT: I'll do it.

END

4:18 P.M. EST

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