

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

**Newsweek/POTUS
Question and Answers
March 4, 2000**

Q: You've talked about registering new guns. What does your plan involve? Why not register all guns?

A: We have licenses for driving and for hunting; I think we should have them too for buying new handguns. Under my plan, new handgun purchasers would first have to get a state-issued photo license showing that they passed the Brady background check and a gun safety training requirement. As a first step, I favor licensing of new handguns over registration of all guns because it's the next practical measure we can enact to keep guns out of the hands of criminals, and help prevent accidental shootings.

Q: Is there any chance of getting your plan through Congress this year?

A: It's always tough to break the stranglehold the gun lobby has on the leaders of this Congress. But we've taken on the gun lobby before and won – and it has made a tremendous difference for the American people. The Brady Law is a great example. People thought it would never pass. But we passed it, and it has prevented gun sales to over half a million felons, fugitives and domestic abusers. So I am willing to take the gun lobby on to pass common-sense gun legislation this year. The past week's tragedies are another reminder why Congress should follow the American people, not the NRA.

Q: Opponents of gun control often say that if they give an inch, you want a mile. In 1998, for example, you held a Rose Garden ceremony to celebrate the fact that gun companies had agreed to ship guns with safety locks. But now this doesn't seem to be enough. What do you say to those who see your efforts as the first step toward a complete crackdown on gun ownership?

A: I applaud the responsible leaders in the gun industry who agreed to ship guns with child safety locks, a common sense measure we should now make the law of the land. But there is clearly more we can do to keep guns out of the wrong hands, and with very little impact on responsible, law-abiding gun owners. I fired my first .22 when I was just a boy. I grew up in a state where half the people have a hunting and fishing license. This isn't about infringing on the ability of hunters and sportsmen to get their firearms. It's about saving lives.

Q: Law enforcement officials have often called for enforcing gun laws already on the books. In Denver, for example, officials are working with the NRA and Handgun Control on Project Exile. Studies show these programs work, but aren't being widely implemented. Do you support them?

A: Yes I do. We've put a lot of resources into local efforts like Operation Ceasefire in Boston, Project Exile in Richmond, and a recently-launched Project Exile in Colorado. I've announced a national gun enforcement initiative, to hire 1000 new gun prosecutors

and 500 more ATF agents and inspectors. We've worked with federal, state and local authorities to bring overall gun prosecutions up significantly, and we've increased federal gun prosecutions by 16 percent since I took office. With Project Exile, with tougher enforcement, with more prosecutions, we're sending a clear message to criminals: if you violate our gun laws, you will pay a severe price. That's partly why the murder rate is down to its lowest level in 31 years, why gun crime has fallen over 35 percent since 1993 and why the overall crime rate has dropped for seven years running – the longest continuous decline on record.

Q: Some say that no law could have kept this particular handgun out of a six year-old's hands. Is that true?

A: We can never know if any one proposal could have prevented these tragedies. Still, it is important to take common-sense steps to keep guns out of the hands of children and criminals. That's why I think all new handguns should be sold with child safety locks. That's why I've proposed \$10 million in my budget to fund the development and expansion of "smart gun" technology – technology that can limit a gun's use to the proper adult owner. That's why I've offered legislation to punish adults who recklessly let children have access to deadly weapons. A dozen children a day are killed by gunfire, many in accidents that could have been prevented. Just because a gun law won't make all the difference doesn't mean it won't make any difference. We have a responsibility to do what we can to bring down gun violence.

Q: Do you support setting aside a portion of the surplus to fund anti-gun law enforcement efforts such as increasing the number of ATF agents and prosecutors?

A: In January, I proposed the largest national gun enforcement initiative in history – and I did it without asking Congress to spend a single surplus dollar. My \$280 million gun enforcement initiative will provide federal, state and local enforcement with more tools than ever to crack down on dangerous gun criminals. It funds 500 new ATF agents and inspectors to help crack down on violent criminals, illegal gun traffickers and bad apple gun dealers. It funds over 1,000 new federal, state and local gun prosecutors and deploys gun enforcement teams in high gun crime areas. And it strengthens the hand of prosecutors by providing more resources to trace crime guns and bullets.

Q: Technology already exists to create a ballistics record from every new gun as it's manufactured. That way, bullets fired from every gun could be traced later. Do you favor requiring gun companies to create such ballistics records?

A: I strongly support partnerships with gun manufacturers to expand ballistics testing. We're already working with one manufacturer on a pilot project, and as part of my gun enforcement initiative, I've tripled funding for ballistics testing to create the first-ever national "fingerprint" network for bullets or shell casings left at the scene of a crime. With this system we can identify criminals and illegal gun traffickers – even in the absence of a firearm. Ballistics testing programs at the FBI and the ATF have already helped over 16,000 criminal investigations of gun crimes in over 40 states.

Q: What else can Americans do to end the sort of violent episodes that we witnessed this week?

A: All of us have a responsibility to act. This week's deadly incidents differed in many ways, but they shared one key element: guns in the wrong hands. So Congress can do its part by sending me common sense legislation that can help keep guns away from criminals, children, and others who should not have them. Responsible members of the gun industry can do their part by working with us to make meaningful changes in the way they do business. At the same time, these incidents speak to a larger problem we all have to address. The media and entertainment industries can help change a culture that too often glorifies violence. Schools and community groups can reach troubled youth before their troubles simmer over. And most fundamentally, parents can talk to their children, teach them to resolve their conflicts peacefully, raise them with the right values. In spite of this week's awful events, I still believe that if we set our minds to it, and work together, we can make this the safest big country in the world.

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

this just kinda happens on television." After his interrogation, the boy sat in his chair, drawing pictures (police did not say of what). Because a judge is unlikely to find that the boy had the requisite criminal "intent" to be charged with the shooting, the authorities had to look elsewhere to appoint blame. A police raid on his uncle's house on Julia Street turned up a stolen 12-gauge shotgun and some crack

cocaine. The pistol used in the shooting was also stolen; police believe that the gun probably came into the house as payment for drugs. On Thursday, police arrested Jamelle James and charged him with involuntary manslaughter for providing the boy with the gun. He pleaded not guilty. The boy's mother, Tamarla, was accused of neglect because, according to the authorities, she knew "marijuana was being

smoked daily" in her brother's house.

Haunted by the shooting, some children don't want to revisit the scene of the crime. "My son is scared to death to go back to school," says Lori Lafond. "He's just terrified. He says, 'Mom, what if it happens to me?' I don't know what to tell him." School authorities are unsure what to do. There is talk of metal detectors and sealing up Room 6, where the shooting took place.



'There Is More We Can Do'

Clinton's challenge to gunmakers, Congress and parents

AFTER LAST WEEK'S deadly shootings, President Clinton provided written answers to questions from NEWSWEEK's Debra Rosenberg and Matt Bai. Excerpts:

NEWSWEEK: Why not register all guns?

CLINTON: We have licenses for driving and for hunting; I think we should have them too for buying new handguns. Under my plan, new handgun purchasers would first have to get a state-issued photo license showing that they passed the Brady background check and a gun-safety training requirement. As a first

step, I favor licensing of new handguns over registration of all guns because it's the next practical measure we can enact ...

Is there any chance Congress will pass your plan this year?

It's always tough to break the stranglehold the gun lobby has on the leaders of this Congress. But we've taken on the gun lobby before and won ... The Brady Law is a great example.

In 1998 you celebrated the fact that several major gun companies agreed to ship guns with safety locks. But now this doesn't seem to be enough. What do you say to those who

see your efforts as the first step toward an outright ban on gun ownership?

I applaud the responsible leaders in the gun industry who agreed to ship guns with child safety locks, but there is clearly more we can do ... I fired my first .22 when I was just a boy. I grew up in a state where half the people have a hunting or fishing license. This isn't about infringing on the ability of hunters and sportsmen to get their firearms. It's about saving lives.

Some say that no law could have kept this handgun out of a 6-year-old's hands.

We can never know if any one proposal could have prevented these tragedies. Still ... all new handguns should be sold with child safety locks ... I've proposed \$10 million to fund the development and expansion of "smart gun" technology that can limit a gun's use to the proper adult owner ... I've offered legislation to punish adults who recklessly let children have access to deadly weapons. A dozen children a day are killed by gunfire ... Just because a gun law won't make all the difference doesn't mean it won't make any difference.

What else can Americans do to end the sort of violent episodes that we witnessed last week?

Last week's deadly incidents differed in many ways, but they shared one key element: guns in the wrong hands. So Congress can do its part by sending me common-sense legislation that can help keep guns away from criminals, children and others who should not have them. Responsible members of the gun industry can do their part by working with us to make meaningful changes ... The media and entertainment industries can help change a culture that too often glorifies violence. Schools and community groups can reach troubled youth before their troubles simmer over. And most fundamentally, parents can talk to their children, teach them to resolve their conflicts peacefully, raise them with the right values. In spite of last week's awful events, I still believe ... we can make this the safest big country in the world.

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