

L.M. Johnson

Document No. _____

WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUM

Date: 4-21-99

ACTION / CONCURRENCE / COMMENT DUE BY: 4/22/99 ASAP

Subject: _____

ADVIS

	ACTION	FYI		ACTION	FYI
VICE PRESIDENT	☒	☐	MOORE	☐	☐
PODESTA	☒	☐	NASH	☐	☐
ECHAVESTE	☒	☐	REED	☒	☐
RICCHETTI	☒	☐	RUFF	☒	☐
LEW	☐	☐	SOSNIK	☒	☐
BERGER	☐	☐	SPERLING	☐	☐
BLUMENTHAL →	☒	☐	STEIN	☒	☐
CAHILL	☐	☐	STERN	☐	☐
FRAMPTON	☐	☐	STRETT	☐	☐
IBARRA	☐	☐	TRAMONTANO	☒	☐
JOHNSON	☐	☐	UCELLI	☒	☐
KLAIN	☒	☐	VERVEER	☒	☐
LANE	☐	☐	WALDMAN	☒	☐
LEWIS	☒	☐	YELLEN	☐	☐
LINDSEY	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
LOCKHART	☐	☒	_____	☐	☐
MARSHALL	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐

REMARKS:

Comments to Lowell Weiss

RESPONSE: _____

Draft 4/22/99 12:30am
Lowell Weiss

(1) one
(2) reach out #

PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON (3) us —
TALKING POINTS FOR DISCUSSION OF LITTLETON TRAGEDY
T.C. WILLIAMS HIGH SCHOOL
ALEXANDRIA, VA
April 22, 1999

— our culture
— our guns/kids

For those of you joining on television, we're at T.C. Williams High School, in Alexandria, Virginia. Like thousands of other schools around the country, T.C. Williams has set aside time today to discuss the tragedy in Littleton, Colorado -- to have teachers and principals and students talk openly about their fears and grief. I can't possibly express how important that is at a time like this. When people don't get a chance to talk about their fears and grief, it just turns inward. It gets trapped inside. It makes a frightening time even worse.

When something like this happens, the tremors shake our country from coast to coast. Of course, the suffering is greatest in the spot where the tragedy hits. The entire community of Littleton has had their world turned upside down. When Columbine students were getting ready for school Tuesday morning, they were thinking about math exams and softball practice and summer jobs. Today, they are grieving for dead and wounded classmates and teachers. They are worried they will never feel safe again.

✓ **The shockwaves from Littleton have reached every school and every home in America.** Children are asking parents to reassure them that it's safe to go to school. Parents are hugging their children extra tight when they get home at the end of the day. America is a very big country. But at our core, we are one community. And today, our entire national community is shaken. We are all praying for the victims and their families. We are all in this together.

And we are all going to come through this together. It is crucial for you to know that America is fundamentally a good and safe country. And we have fundamentally good and safe schools. Of course, we cannot ignore what happened in Littleton. We cannot ignore the fact that this week we have seen horrible acts committed by two apparently troubled and angry boys. But we are strong country. A country where acts of warmth and decency are the rule -- and destructive acts are the awful exception.

In fact, we can see that in Littleton itself. Near Columbine High School, men and women waited in line for four hours to give blood. Thousands of citizens have turned out for vigils and have donated money to help with long-term counseling. Local hotels are providing free rooms for family members of the victims. Clergy and psychologists from all over the state have rushed to Littleton to comfort parents and students.

✓ **Because of this evil, destructive act, people have reached out to others as never before.** When one Columbine student was hiding in a classroom, she wrote a letter to her older sister. "I knew everything would be OK if you could have been here to hold me or let me cry in your arms. I'm so sorry for being the bratty little sister.... All I ever wanted to do was be like you. I love you so much. I can't wait to see you again."

✓ **There's is nothing more important in the world than keeping our schools safe.** That's why we're already helping schools to hire and train 2,000 new community police officers ... to develop anti-drug and anti-violence plans ... to create new after-school, mentoring, counseling, and conflict-resolution programs ... to put in place tough but fair discipline rules ... to recognize the signs of trouble before they turn into tragedy.

✓ **I need your help: Reach out to others -- your friends, your siblings, even the quiet person in gym class you've hardly spoken to before.** Be a good listener. Be sensitive to early-warning signs. When we look back at past episodes of violence, the patterns are often very clear -- and I want to talk more about those signs in a minute. I know that reporting dangerous signs to a teacher or principal may feel like you're tattling. But doing so can save a life.

If you're having trouble controlling your anger, or you feel bullied or lonely, or you just need someone to talk to, please seek help. It doesn't have to be a professional. It can be a coach, a grandmother, a minister, a band leader. I promise you -- adults want to listen.

In time, the intense grief we feel will fade. But we cannot allow ourselves to just move on or to simply hope and pray this kind of horror doesn't strike again. Talking about the causes of and solutions to violence cannot be the kind of thing we do for a day or two after a tragedy strikes. We must make preventing violence a part of our everyday life.

###