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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
Speech by
PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON

Monday, April 11, 1994

The Great Hall
Department of Justice
Washington, D.C.

1 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Ladies and gentlemen,
2 please remain standing for the Star-Spangled Banner.

3 (Whereupon, the Star-Spangled Banner was played.)

4 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Mr. President, I am
5 pleased to recognize the distinguished representatives of
6 American law enforcement who have joined us here today, and
7 have joined us from the beginning in our efforts to try to
8 get a solid, fine crime bill passed.

9 I will ask everybody to wait and stand.

10 Nick Oboyski of the Federal Law Enforcement
11 Officers Association, Bernie Keyindorski of the Fraternal
12 Order of Police, Sylvester Dawtry, International Association
13 of Chiefs of Police, Robert Theisman of the International
14 Union of Police Associations, Mark Skurier, representing
15 major city chiefs, Bob Skully of the National Association
16 of Police Organizations; Ronald Campbell of the National
17 Black Police Association, Joseph White of the National
18 Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, Betsy
19 Cantrell of the National Sheriffs Association, John Hughes
20 of the National Troopers Coalition; Chuck Wexler of the
21 Police Executive Research Forum; and Phil Mathews of the
22 Police Foundation.

23 Would you please stand?

24 We are very pleased to have you here with us
25 today.

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1 (Applause.)

2 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Each time I have talked
3 about the crime bill they have been there with us,
4 Mr. President. And I want to personally thank each one of
5 them.

6 I am deeply honored today to acknowledge the
7 presence here of 12 new members of the Albany, Georgia,
8 Police Department and two of their colleagues who are in the
9 audience. Would you please stand?

10 (Applause.)

11 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: These new officers were
12 hired and are on the beat now in Albany because of the
13 President's plan. He used Federal resources to hire more
14 police.

15 Thank you so much for being here with us today.

16 (Applause.)

17 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Mr. President, this past
18 week I travelled across this country and talked to so many
19 different people, walked through so many different
20 neighborhoods, heard from so many extraordinarily wonderful
21 Americans.

22 I went to speak with them about crime and what we
23 can do about it, and how the crime bill can have an impact.
24 Everywhere I went I heard the same message loud and clear.
25 The people want action.

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1 We need to pass the President's crime bill now.
2 The time for politics and partisanship is over.

3 On my trip I met with Democratic and Republican
4 governors, mayors and elected officials. They agreed. We
5 need to seize this splendid opportunity to make real
6 progress in reducing crime and violence in this Nation.

7 I spoke with people in Detroit and Dallas, in
8 northern New Jersey and Norman, Oklahoma, Los Angeles,
9 Memphis, and Nashville. And everywhere, Mr President, I
10 heard the same thing. We need more community police
11 officers on the streets, police officers in our
12 neighborhoods, working with citizens, understanding
13 citizens, involving citizens in their decisions.

14 And by citizens, again and again I heard including
15 our young people and making them part of a team to rebuild
16 our neighborhoods. We need to do more to punish the violent
17 offenders and get them off the streets. That is the message
18 I heard as well.

19 We need to do more to prevent crime and give our
20 young people something to say yes to -- I heard again and
21 again from police officials and others.

22 In short, Mr President, people I spoke with this
23 week, and we will hear from some of them today, want to see
24 Congress pass this crime bill. And they are puzzled as to
25 why it has not happened yet. And they will be frustrated

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1 by further delays.

2 Wherever I travelled, to large city or small town,
3 urban, suburban or rural area, people embraced the key
4 components of your anti-violence program, Mr. President, of
5 policing, punishment and prevention, a balanced, common
6 sense approach.

7 The crime bill will put 100,000 cops on the beat
8 in American cities and towns, developing a trust with the
9 citizens they serve. I cannot tell you of the enthusiasm
10 I found across this country for community policing. I saw
11 community policing taking hold in a Los Angeles public
12 housing project named Pueblo Del Rio. There I visited a
13 school where the children were 40 percent African American,
14 40 percent Hispanic, and 20 percent Cambodian.

15 As I walked through this elementary school, I
16 asked some of them what they wanted to be when they grow up.
17 And they turned and they looked over at the police officer
18 and they said with big smiles on their face and a great deal
19 of trust, I want to be a police officer.

20 Well, I wonder what the child's answer would have
21 been in the days of before community policing began in
22 Pueblo Del Rio.

23 In Dallas I listened to an eloquent plea from a
24 high school senior, Octavia Baxter. Octavia told me that
25 she had heard of the stereotypes about police officers as

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1 the enemy. Now, she hopes that community policing programs
2 will break down the stereotypes and help police officers
3 serve as strong, positive role models and forge lasting
4 bonds between the community and the police.

5 I met a dry cleaning store owner in Dallas named
6 Jasper Bacchus, and Mr. Bacchus' community police officer,
7 who told me how community police on that block helped reduce
8 crime and created more opportunity in this hard-hit South
9 Dallas neighborhood.

10 Congress should listen to Octavia Baxter and
11 Jasper Bacchus and Los Angeles Police Chief Willy Williams,
12 and police officers and chiefs around the Nation, and
13 citizens around the Nation -- America needs these officers
14 on the streets. In community policing programs, they can
15 make a difference.

16 America needs the 100,000 new police officers that
17 would be provided for in your crime bill, Mr. President.
18 The crime bill will also help punish violent criminals
19 swiftly and severely. Our legislation includes a tough,
20 smart three strikes and you are out provision. And it
21 includes money to help States lock up violent criminals and
22 keep them there.

23 Again, Mr President, as I travelled I heard from
24 victims and from survivors of homicides over and over about
25 the atrocious crimes committed by violent criminals who

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1 should be behind bars rather than walking the streets.

2 Your crime bill will make sure those criminals are
3 locked up for longer periods. And I can tell you that that
4 is something that scores of people I met this past week will
5 applaud.

6 The crime bill will launch the largest violence
7 prevention program in the Nation's history.

8 Mr. President, your youth employment skills
9 program will give kids in America something to say yes to
10 by providing job training and opportunities to kids who are
11 in hard hit, high crime areas. The young people of America
12 want to be involved. They want to make a difference. They
13 want to contribute. And this program will give them the
14 chance to do so.

15 The ounce of prevention programs contained in your
16 bill will keep schools open after hours and expand after
17 school activities, such as boys and girls groups, to keep
18 kids safely off the streets. Your proposed innovative
19 partnerships for kids, including midnight sports and police
20 partnerships, will help keep our kids out of trouble.

21 All over this country I saw men and women, young
22 and old, who believe they can make a difference in the
23 struggle against violence and crime. These Americans
24 understand that each and every one of us must do our part.

25 Last week, I met Americans who are ready and

1 willing to take up this role.

2 Now, it is Congress' turn.

3 The crime bill contains the kind of no-nonsense,
4 sensible anti-crime efforts America needs. Congress should
5 pass the crime bill, and pass it now.

6 (Applause.)

7 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Now, I would like to
8 introduce you to three individuals who will tell you about
9 the different community policing programs, and what these
10 programs have done and the difference they have made in
11 their lives and in their neighborhoods.

12 I heard from Eddie Cutanda in Boston on my last
13 trip there as we discussed the crime bill and anti-crime
14 initiatives. Eddie is an example to me of the young people
15 of America, people who want to belong, who want to
16 contribute and who want to make a difference and need just
17 a little bit of support along the way.

18 Eddie.

19 (Applause.)

20 MR. CUTANDA: I would like to thank President
21 Clinton and Attorney General Reno for being here.

22 (Applause.)

23 MR. CUTANDA: I would like to introduce community
24 police officers, Officer Harold White and Tony Platt.

25 (Applause.)

1 MR. CUTANDA: And I would like to introduce two
2 friends of mine, Tyrone Burton and Phuong Duong. They are
3 in my acting group, Extreme Closeup, and acting in the NYC
4 Dorchester Youth/Collaborative and we do writing and acting
5 and stuff.

6 (Applause.)

7 MR. CUTANDA: Back in the days I used to hate the
8 police, I used to run the streets with my friends. My
9 friends used to pump my head up with all kinds of things
10 like, oh, the police will whack you, and this and that. I
11 guess because they were the violent ones and they will get
12 put away, so they will mad about it. Of course, you are
13 going to feel like that.

14 Then I started going to NYC. That is where I met
15 Tyrone and Phuong. You know, we started doing acting and
16 stuff, because NYC is a place where you do stuff that you
17 want to do. You escape the streets, you get away from the
18 violence and drugs. You know, that is the place I needed
19 and we needed.

20 Then we met Harold and Tony after a while. At
21 first I was shaky about them. But I got surprised because
22 they helped me turn my life around. They were there for me
23 like brothers, you know, and I love them.

24 You know, Tyrone, Phuong and myself, we are not
25 -- and I say it again -- we are not a lost generation.

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1 (Applause.)

2 MR. CUTANDA: Even though a lot of adults are
3 trying to lose us. At DYC we found Harold and Tony and they
4 found us.

5 Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Last Tuesday night, I
8 heard one of the most eloquent people I have heard in a long
9 time, a person who cares passionately about her community
10 and about all of its people, Mrs. Earline Williams of
11 Trenton.

12 (Applause.)

13 MRS. WILLIAMS: Good afternoon. My husband,
14 Thornton, and I are senior citizens. We retired from our
15 respective jobs when we reached the age of 62. We live in
16 the West Ward of Trenton, the capital of New Jersey.

17 Thornton and I decided that we were still young
18 and not ready for rocking chairs. We wanted to give
19 something back to our community, so we became volunteers.
20 Many of our peers are locked in their homes, afraid to
21 venture out because of the criminal element taking over our
22 neighborhoods. We will not let this happen to us.

23 These are our golden years, and we fully intend
24 to enjoy them. This is our time to stop and smell the
25 roses.

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1 For the last four years, we have been volunteers
2 at police ministation number one. It opened because one of
3 our businessmen donated the building for \$1 a year. We are
4 working with our community because we have dreams of seeing
5 it become a clean, safe, quiet, drug-free place in which to
6 live again.

7 I stand here before you today to implore you to
8 please continue the funding for my community. Our city
9 government is already working with us. Because of community
10 policing and the community working together, our
11 neighborhood is slowly becoming a better place in which to
12 live.

13 We have seen a marked improvement because of
14 community policing. When our part of Trenton declined, we
15 were filled with sadness. Now, we are beginning to see the
16 light at the end of the tunnel. And our accomplishments all
17 exceed our failures.

18 I humbly and sincerely implore to please pass the
19 crime bill. By continuing to fund community policing, our
20 self-esteem has risen and we have high hopes for the future,
21 because you have enabled us to persevere.

22 Thank you all for caring about our future.

23 (Applause.)

24 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Now, I would like to
25 introduce Lt. Earnest Williams, one of the veteran officers

1 of the Albany, Georgia, Police Department.

2 (Applause.)

3 LT. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Ms. Reno.

4 Good afternoon. I am Lt. Williams, District Two
5 Coordinator for community-oriented policing in Albany,
6 Georgia. I have been employed with the Albany Police
7 Department for 14 years. In the fall of 1993, the mayor and
8 city commission made a commitment to community-oriented
9 policing, because the traditional way of policing was not
10 getting the job done.

11 This new approach would get officers away from the
12 cuff and stuff syndrome. The stuff and cuff syndrome was
13 allowing us to not interact with the community as we have
14 an opportunity now to do with community-oriented policing.
15 It permits the officers to form a partnership with law
16 abiding citizens. Most detest the criminals who have
17 invaded their lives and are eager to help.

18 When you put a community police officer on the
19 street, you lay the groundwork for proactive policing, just
20 not reactive. For instance, after the implementation of our
21 bike patrol, citizens began getting involved in supplying
22 information that led to several arrests. Through these new
23 partnerships, our officers on the street are also working
24 with citizens to address conditions that often contribute
25 to crime.

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1 Thank you, Mr. President, for forming the
2 partnership with our community, to help make it possible to
3 hire these officers on the stage today. The Federal funding
4 that helped hire these officers has greatly enhanced our
5 community's ability to aggressively implement
6 community-oriented policing. This extra manpower will allow
7 us to fight crime in a proactive manner, to make
8 neighborhoods in Albany, Georgia, safer.

9 This kind of commitment reinforces the belief of
10 police and citizens that there is some light at the end of
11 the tunnel.

12 Thank you very much.

13 (Applause.)

14 LT. WILLIAMS: Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me
15 great pleasure to introduce to you the President of the
16 United States.

17 (Standing ovation.)

18 PRESIDENT CLINTON: Thank you very much, Officer
19 Williams. You just keep doing your work and I will be glad
20 to carry your notebook any time.

21 (Laughter.)

22 PRESIDENT CLINTON: There are a lot of days when
23 you do more than we do up here anyway.

24 I want to thank you, and thank you, Earline
25 Williams, for your commitment and your remarkable statement,

1 and the work you and your husband are doing.

2 Thank you, Eddie, for reminding us that we have
3 an obligation to fight for your future. Thanks for bringing
4 your friends. And thank you, officers, for giving him
5 something to look up to and believe in.

6 (Applause.)

7 PRESIDENT CLINTON: I want to welcome the new
8 officers from Albany, Georgia, and thank them for their
9 commitment to law enforcement, and thank all the other
10 people in law enforcement who are here at the local and
11 State and Federal level.

12 In the last congressional recess, like the
13 Attorney General, I got out around the country and listened
14 to people and talked to them about a lot of issues. And I
15 found that all over the country, in every region, among
16 people from all walks of life, all races and incomes groups
17 and political parties there is a deep concern about the tide
18 of crime and violence in this country, and about the
19 underlying strains on our fabric as a common people that
20 these have imposed.

21 We have simply got to do everything we can to move
22 forward in helping the American people to reduce crime, to
23 say no to those things which they ought to say no to, and
24 to give our young people some more things to say yes to.

25 I came here today to emphasize how terribly

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1 important it is that the House of Representatives consider
2 the crime bill immediately on its return. The Speaker has
3 agreed to do that.

4 I then want the Senate and the House to get
5 together and resolve their differences, and send me the
6 crime bill as soon as possible.

7 The American people have waited long enough, we
8 do not need to waste their time with frivolous or political
9 amendments and delay. We do not need to take months on a
10 task that can be done in a couple of weeks.

11 If the bill is on my desk in weeks, I will only
12 take a minute to sign it, and then the American people will
13 begin to have the tools they need to solve so many of their
14 problems.

15 This has been a good year for us in this country.
16 Our deficit is going down and our economy is going up.
17 Twice as many private sector jobs have come into this
18 economy in the last 14 months than in the previous four
19 years.

20 After seven years of gridlock, the Brady bill
21 became the Brady law. And it is already working to stop
22 felons and fugitives from purchasing handguns.

23 And I am proud it was passed with the help of
24 America's law enforcement officers. But everything that we
25 are trying to do to move this country forward and to bring

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1 this country together will be undermined unless we can give
2 the American people a greater sense that they are secure in
3 their homes, on their streets and in their schools.

4 The number of murders has tripled since 1960. So
5 has the number of crimes.

6 For uniformed police officers, death by gunfire
7 will soon surpass death by car accidents. Almost a third
8 of all of our families have had someone victimized by crime,

9 Today, one in 20 American children carry a weapon
10 to school, and over 150,000 stay home every day because they
11 are afraid of what might happen to them in school.

12 We know the crime bill cannot solve all of these
13 problems. We know many of them will have to be solved by
14 those people who are here today in uniform and people like
15 them, and the friends and neighbors they have, like
16 Mrs. Williams. We know that.

17 We know that unless there are young people like
18 Eddie and his friends who are willing to work and be role
19 models themselves and make something of their own lives,
20 that everything we do here in Washington will be limited.

21 But we know, too, that we have to take the lead.
22 We have to take the initiative. And that we can give people
23 like these people the tools they need to seize control of
24 their lives and make their community safer and better places
25 to learn, work and grow.

1 The crime bill provides funding for another
2 100,000 police officers over five years for community
3 policing. Because it works, it will make a difference.

4 You already heard what Office Williams said about
5 12 officers in Albany, Georgia. The mayor of Houston put
6 655 more police officers on the beat. In 15 months, crime
7 dropped 22 percent, murders went down 27 percent.

8 This can be done everywhere. This bill, with
9 community policing, will help the police officers of our
10 country not only to catch more criminals and put them behind
11 bars, but to reduce crime and to connect with more young
12 people before it is too late.

13 I was very moved by what Eddie said about his
14 attitude about the police because of the work of these two
15 fine police officers. We know that crime can be reduced and
16 that lives can be enhanced.

17 So, as the Attorney General said, policing is a
18 big part of this crime bill.

19 If Congress passes the bill soon to give the
20 American people more police officers, I will make this
21 commitment to you. I will cut through the bureaucracy and
22 the red tape from Washington, so that within a year, 20,000
23 of these new officers will actually be hired and trained and
24 working to make our streets safer.

25 If they will send me the bill, we will cut the red

1 tape. No more politics in Congress, no more red tape in the
2 bureaucracy. Let's give the police to the American people,
3 and let's do it this year.

4 (Applause.)

5 PRESIDENT CLINTON: The second thing this bill is
6 about is punishment. And I want to emphasize, if I might,
7 three things. There has been a great deal of debate and
8 much honest disagreement about whether we ought to have some
9 sort of three strikes and you are out bill. I would like
10 to make two points about that.

11 As someone who started my public career as a State
12 attorney general almost two decades ago now, first of all,
13 an overwhelming percentage of the really serious violent
14 crimes are committed by a relatively few people. Even a
15 small percentage of the criminals in our country commit an
16 overwhelming percentage of the really serious violent crime.

17 Secondly, this law is designed to be directed, if
18 it is properly drawn, against a narrow class of people,
19 those who do not commit crimes for which it is already one
20 strike and you are out. Keep in mind, many of our crimes
21 today can get you a live sentence or a very long sentence
22 just by doing it one time. But there are people that are
23 clearly and demonstrably highly likely to take life or to
24 commit serious, horrible crimes.

25 We know them by their profiles, who do things

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1 which clearly indicate this, and still they can wind up
2 being paroled after relatively modest sentences. This bill
3 is designed, properly drawn, and the Attorney General has
4 done a fine job of working on the bill that is coming to the
5 House, to be directed against that narrow class of people.

6 I do think those folks can say, if you do this
7 three times, we do not think you should be paroled. And I
8 believe it will enable us, for those who think this is too
9 harsh, to create more enlightened attitudes about other
10 people who may be put in prison for too long a period of
11 time, or who may need alternative rehabilitation strategies.

12 But these police officers are out there putting
13 their lives on the line oftentimes they are facing people
14 who are back on the street that they know are highly likely
15 to do something that is life threatening.

16 So, respectfully, I dispute those who believe that
17 we cannot have a three strikes and you are out law that is
18 good, that is properly drawn and that makes a difference.
19 We should not let a small percentage of even the criminal
20 population terrorize the country if we can find a way to
21 stop it. And this is our best effort.

22 The second point I want to make is that this bill
23 does some other things about punishment, too. This bill
24 encourages States and localities to find alternative
25 punishments for first-time nonviolent offenders -- for young

1 people, boot camps or other kinds of community-based
2 programs, which may reconnect people to their communities
3 before it is too late and which will give them a chance not
4 only to be punished, but to learn something while they are
5 doing their respective sentences.

6 So, this is a smart punishment bill.

7 The third thing this bill is about is prevention.
8 We know these programs work, too, especially for young
9 people. And I want to say a special word of thanks here to
10 the Attorney General. When I appointed her, I wanted
11 someone who had actual experience on the front line fighting
12 crime, and who understood that you have to be both tough and
13 smart.

14 And her relentless, constant compassionate but
15 tough-minded advocacy for a sensible prevention strategy is
16 critical to the fact that we now have about \$1 billion in
17 this plan for jobs for young people in high-crime
18 neighborhoods, and recreation programs and summer programs
19 and opportunities for young people to bond with caring,
20 concerned adults, who care about their future.

21 I thank her for that. And that is a very
22 important part of this bill. It will make a huge
23 difference.

24 (Applause.)

25 PRESIDENT CLINTON: A big part of that is making

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1 the schools safe and drug-free and free of violence again.
2 If our children cannot be safe in school and going to and
3 from school, they are going to have a very hard time. After
4 all, a lot of the young people most at risk of being victims
5 of crime as well as at risk of becoming criminals at a young
6 age live in communities very different from those that most
7 of us grew up in -- communities where the family structure
8 has been weakened, communities where other organizations are
9 weaker than they once were, and communities in which there
10 is almost no work for people to do.

11 When you take work and community and family out
12 of a neighborhood, you create an awful vacuum in which only
13 bad things can occur -- unless someone moves in to fill the
14 vacuum.

15 Our schools are trying, but we are asking them to
16 do, in many of our communities today, we are asking them to
17 do things that no one ever thought the schools could do
18 alone. And we have got to continue to support them through
19 the safe school initiatives and the other prevention plans.

20 So, that is what we are trying to do in this crime
21 bill -- more police, more punishment and more prevention.

22 In this time of budgetary constraints, the very
23 idea that we are about to pass a program that will involve
24 over \$20 billion in new money is an astonishing thing. It
25 is a lot more money for State and local initiatives. But

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1 we have to do it. And I am proud of the fact that it is
2 going to be paid for not with a tax increase, but with the
3 phase down of the Federal Government.

4 We are reducing, over a five-year period, the size
5 of the Federal bureaucracy by about 250,000 people. And all
6 the savings are going to go on into a trust fund to pay for
7 this crime bill.

8 So that, at the end of five years, we will have
9 a Federal Government that is as small as it was when
10 President Kennedy was in office. And the money saved from
11 that downsizing will be giving our communities a chance to
12 give our kids a future and our people a chance to be safe
13 on the streets.

14 I think that is a pretty good switch.

15 (Applause.)

16 PRESIDENT CLINTON: Let me say again in closing,
17 there is not a moment to lose. People are trying everywhere
18 to do something about this, and everywhere they are being
19 frustrated. The case of the Chicago Housing Authority has
20 been in the news because just a few days ago a Federal
21 District Court declared that the Housing Authority's own
22 policy of sweeping their units for guns for ineligible
23 people living there and for drugs was unconstitutional.

24 As soon as I heard about that I asked the Attorney
25 General and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development,

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1 Henry Cisneros, to develop another policy that is
2 constitutional and effective. Because I have been to the
3 Chicago Housing Projects.

4 And I have been in the places where the sweeps
5 occurred and where the housing units were cleaned up, and
6 where the people who are living in the housing units were
7 hired to work with the police to ride up in the elevator and
8 walk down the stairs and keep the places clean. And I saw
9 children pouring out of housing units, pouring out to run
10 up to the head of the Chicago Housing Authority, Vince Lane,
11 as if he were their savior. Because he simply gave them a
12 safe place to live.

13 So, does this administration want to follow the
14 Constitution of the United States?

15 You bet we do.

16 But I cannot believe that we cannot find a way to
17 have a constitutional search of places that we know are full
18 of victims of crime because they harbor criminals. We are
19 going to find a way to solve this problem.

20 Thirteen people died in Chicago violently last
21 weekend, three of them in the Robert Taylor Homes Project.
22 Last night, Secretary Cisneros spent the night in that
23 project, and informed me -- and we had a conversation about
24 this -- he and the Attorney General are working on it.

25 But I say this just to make this point. Those

1 folks living out there in the housing projects, most of them
2 are not criminals. Most of them are good people. They obey
3 the law. They are doing the best they can to raise their
4 children. They deserve our best and our quickest efforts.

5 So, I say to you again in closing, I thank you for
6 coming here, but we know, we are all preaching to the saved
7 today. Tomorrow, when the Congress comes back, there are
8 many other things that will claim their attention. I will
9 ask them to think about many other things. You must say,
10 pass the crime bill now.

11 Thank you very much.

12 (Standing ovation.)

13 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO.

14 (Whereupon, at 12:55 p.m., the speech concluded.)

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