

that President Roosevelt used 59 years ago yesterday.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:40 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. H.R. 4277, approved August 15, was assigned Public Law No. 103-296.

Statement on Signing the Social Security Independence and Program Improvements Act of 1994

August 15, 1994

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 4277, the "Social Security Independence and Program Improvements Act of 1994." Fifty-nine years ago, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the original Social Security Act, creating one of the most important and successful Government programs of all times. With the enactment of H.R. 4277, we are beginning a new chapter in the history of the Social Security program, one which recognizes the program's importance by elevating the stature of the agency responsible for its administration. Once combined with a genuine reform of our health care system, we will have fulfilled the vision of the original architects of the Social Security system to provide Americans protection against the vicissitudes of old age and ill health.

Establishing the Social Security Administration as an independent agency within the executive branch reflects my commitment to maintain the confidence of all Americans in the Social Security program. I sincerely hope that it will reassure those currently paying into the system that they too will receive benefits when they retire. For nearly 60 years, the Social Security Administration has done an admirable job of carrying out its principal mandate: ensuring that Americans receive the Social Security benefits to which they are entitled. The agency's new status recognizes and strengthens our commitment to this tradition of public service.

As I have stated many times, my Administration is committed to "putting people first." Consistent with this philosophy, I issued Executive Order 12862 directing public officials to "embark upon a revolution within the Federal Government . . . to provide service

to the public that matches or exceeds the best service available in the private sector." Establishing an independent Social Security Administration will enhance its ability to meet this goal and provide "world class service" to all Americans.

I also want to highlight that H.R. 4277 includes important provisions designed to strengthen the integrity of the disability programs administered by the Social Security Administration. For example, recipients disabled due to substance abuse will now only receive benefits for a limited time (generally 36 months). These recipients must also undergo appropriate, available treatment.

Finally, I must note that, in the opinion of the Department of Justice, the provision that the President can remove the single Commissioner only for neglect of duty or malfeasance in office raises a significant constitutional question. I am prepared to work with the Congress on a corrective amendment that would resolve this constitutional question so as to eliminate the risk of litigation.

Again, I am pleased to approve H.R. 4277 and to reaffirm my commitment to carrying out the Social Security program for the benefit of our Nation's citizens.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
August 15, 1994.

Remarks on Crime Legislation

August 15, 1994

Thank you. Thank you very much, Marc, Janice, Steve, and Dewey, and to all the rest of you who are here. We have just heard from the real American interests in the crime bill.

Last week, the House of Representatives walked away from Polly Klaas and Jody Sposato and James Darby and all the law enforcement officials in this country who have worked so very hard for this crime bill. When you walk away from our police officers and from our kids, from our hard-working citizens with their futures before them or our senior citizens who have given their lives to make this a better country, and you do it on a procedural trick so you can still go back home and pretend that you didn't vote

against the crime bill, and you would even have voted for it had it only come to a vote, there's something wrong with the American system of Government. And it finds its way into the lives of people that are still around. Polly's sister, Annie, told me she's still afraid of being kidnapped, so she's built an elaborate alarm system in her room with ropes and bells. There's something wrong when James Darby and his classmates who are still living were so afraid of violence that they had to participate in a special program to help them cope with it. And the worst part of their fears is that there's truth behind them.

Yes, this is the greatest country in the world and the longest lasting democracy in the world. And none of us would live anywhere else for anything. But we have to face the fact that we have the highest murder rate in the world and that our children are more at risk here than they would be in most other countries and all other advanced countries, because we have simply failed to act with the discipline and determination necessary to preserve democracy's most fundamental obligation, the maintenance of law and order, without which freedom and progress cannot proceed.

The crime bill makes "three strikes and you're out" the law of the land, puts 100,000 police on the street, builds more prisons to lock up serious offenders, takes handguns away from juveniles and bans assault weapons and provides investments and prevention to give our kids a better start in life, deals more sensibly with the terrible scourge of drugs that are responsible for so many of the crimes we have. These are things which ought to be done.

How can the House explain to Marc Klaas why the law that might have saved his daughter's life, had it been enacted years ago, couldn't come up for a vote? How could a politician go to a little child like Meghan Sposato and explain that, well, they just couldn't figure out a way to bring to a vote a law that would have taken the deadly weapon that killed her mother out of the hands of a deranged person? And how could a Member of Congress explain to James Darby's mother why they won't put police on the street who might have allowed little James to complete his last walk home?

If Washington had acted 6 years ago, some of these lives might have been saved. If Washington will act this week, a whole lot of lives can still be saved.

Last Friday I met with some police officers in Minnesota. I told them that they had never walked away from us and that Washington should not walk away from them. Well, the parents of this country should have the same pledge, and the children of this country should have the same pledge. You heard Janice say that in James Darby's wonderful letter to me, which I have read over and over and over again since last Mother's Day, he said, "I know you could do something about this, and I'm asking you nicely to do it."

Well, my fellow Americans, we have asked the Congress nicely long enough. There should be no more excuses, no more tricks, no more delays, and no more discussion about whether this bill is a Democratic bill or a Republican bill or a Clinton bill. I don't know when I will ever be able to get it across to people here that what we do here is not about us, it is about the rest of America. So let Congress hear this: Pass the Darby-Klaas-Sposato crime bill, and do it now.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Marc Klaas, father of kidnap-murder victim Polly Klaas; Steven Sposato, whose wife, Jody, was killed in a shooting; and Janice Payne, whose son, James Darby, was killed shortly after he wrote to the President about crime in his community.

Nomination for United States District Court Judges

August 16, 1994

The President today nominated four individuals to serve on the U.S. District Court: Elaine F. Bucklo, David H. Coar, and Robert W. Gittleman for the Northern District of Illinois, and Paul E. Riley for the Southern District of Illinois.

"These nominees will bring legal talent and dedication to the Federal bench," the President said. "I know they will serve our country with distinction."