

Week Ending Friday, October 10, 1997

Statement on Crime Statistics

October 3, 1997

Today the Federal Bureau of Investigation released its final crime statistics for 1996, and the results are good news for all Americans. We are finally—and decisively—tipping the scales of justice in favor of law-abiding Americans. Overall crime is down for the fifth year in a row, with the biggest reductions coming in violent crime (6 percent)—and especially murders (9 percent). Reported rapes, robberies, assaults, and all types of property crimes are down from the previous year. Even the arrest rate for violent juveniles, which had skyrocketed for 7 years, has now gone down for 2 years in a row.

For 5 years, my administration has worked with police, prosecutors, school principals, and community leaders on a tough, smart crime strategy to attack violent crime. Together, we have fought for more police in our communities, fewer guns on our streets, tougher punishment for violent offenders, and better opportunities for our kids. Today's crime statistics show that, armed with these tools, we are moving in the right direction.

NOTE: This statement was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 3 but was embargoed for release until 9 a.m., October 4.

The President's Radio Address

October 4, 1997

Good morning. Today I want to talk about our responsibility for raising our children and strengthening our families. Six years ago yesterday, when I announced that I would seek the Presidency, I said that our greatness depends upon our ability to create opportunity for all, get responsibility from all, and build a community of all Americans; and that the role of Government was to give our people the tools and establish the environment that

would enable them to build that kind of America. I also said that nothing would ever replace the fundamental role of citizens' responsibility.

That is nowhere more important than when it comes to the family. The family is the cornerstone of our society. It unites us across all our faiths. This week, for example, Jewish parents at Rosh Hashana say a blessing for the family and over their children. The United States Catholic Conference has noted, "The most important work to help our children is done quietly—in our homes and neighborhoods, in our parishes and community organizations. No government can love a child and no policy can substitute for a family's care, but clearly," the Catholic Conference has noted, "families can be helped or hurt" by the actions of government.

Here we have tried to help families. From improving our schools to helping parents reconcile the demands of work and childrearing, to expanding access to college and health care, to punishing domestic violence, families have always been at the heart of our concerns. We have worked hard to help parents take responsibility for their children and even to require that as much as we can.

We passed the family leave law to allow parents to take some time off to care for sick children or welcome new babies. We've raised the minimum wage and increased the earned-income tax credit so that Americans who work full time will be able to raise their children out of poverty. We cracked down on deadbeat dads, increasing child support collection by 50 percent. We're building a new system of welfare that promotes work and responsible parenting. And we're doing everything we can to punish domestic violence and to reduce it. And of course, the strong economy we have helped to build has created millions of high-paying jobs, bringing dignity, stability, and opportunity for millions of families.

This has been an important concern of all the members of our administration for a long time. Even before we took office, the Vice President and Tipper Gore had begun holding their annual family conferences in Nashville, exploring all the various challenges facing our families in their efforts to stay together and raise their children. And the First Lady has been working on these issues for 25 years. Soon she'll be holding a national conference here on child care to help people get affordable, accessible quality child care. And she's raised some brave questions, like whether we ought to toughen our divorce laws to make it more difficult for parents to walk away from their children.

But the most important work always is done in the hearts and homes of individuals. And it's clear to everyone that in recent decades too many parents, especially men, have not taken their responsibilities seriously enough to their families, their children, and themselves. And there are serious consequences. We know, for example, that the simple failure to pay child support is one of the chief reasons women and children are on welfare. And this week, the Vice President and Secretary Riley released a report showing that when fathers do take an active role, their children do better—much better—in school.

The need for men to take responsibility for themselves and their families is something that unites Americans of all faiths and backgrounds and beliefs. A couple of years ago we had a million man march in the District of Columbia which highlighted the importance of African-American men building families and raising their children and taking responsibility. There were many people who had a lot of political differences with some of the speakers, but no one questioned the need or the sincerity of the hundreds of thousands of men who came from all across America to reaffirm their personal responsibility for their children.

Today, thousands of members of a Christian men's organization, Promise Keepers, are meeting on The Mall in Washington. Again, there are those who have political differences with some of the statements which have been made by some leaders of the organization. But again, no one can question the

sincerity of the hundreds of thousands of men who have filled football stadiums across our country and who are willing to reassume their responsibilities to their families and to their children and, therefore, to our future. Their presence here is yet another example of the Nation's understanding and attention to the need to strengthen our families. There is nothing more important.

When all of us, men and women, take responsibility for raising our children and passing on our values, our families are strengthened. And when our families are stronger, America is stronger.

When I think of how many parents there are out there like my mother, who sacrificed to raise their children, when Hillary and I look with bittersweet pride at our own daughter going off to college now, I'm more acutely aware than ever of the special responsibilities and the wonderful rewards of parenthood. For me, there has been no job, even the Presidency, that is more important. And that should be true for all mothers and fathers. The future of our children is truly in our hands.

Thank for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on Campaign Finance Reform Legislation

October 4, 1997

For 5 years now we have watched the bipartisan effort to reform our campaign finance laws die at the hands of a filibuster in the United States Senate. I hope this year will be different. Republican Senator John McCain and Democratic Senator Russ Feingold have a strong bill that would curb the power of special interests and increase the confidence of the American people in our campaign finance system.

But this Tuesday, their opponents will try once again to kill this bipartisan bill, which has the support of every Democratic Senator and a number of Republicans. They'll try it by using a "poison pill" amendment that will guarantee that reform dies one more time.