

Congress informed about this important issue.

Sincerely,

**William J. Clinton**

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 6.

### **Remarks on the Assault Weapons Ban**

*April 6, 1998*

Thank you very much, Secretary Rubin. Thank you for your efforts. Madam Attorney General, thank you. Mr. Vice President, thank you. And to the members of the law enforcement community and Secretary Kelly, Mr. Magaw, Attorney General Miller, Congressman Engel, to representatives of Handgun Control and the victims of violent crime, and to all of you who have come here today, I thank you very much.

As the Vice President and the Attorney General and the Secretary of Treasury have said, 5 years ago we made a commitment as an administration to recover our Nation's streets from crime and violence, to provide security for our families and our children. It required a new determination by communities and by Government. It took a new philosophy of law enforcement, based not on tough talk, which was always in ample supply, but on tough action and smart action, a philosophy based simply on what works, community policing, strong antigang efforts, targeted deterrence, smarter, tougher penalties, a comprehensive strategy that includes all these elements and puts community policing at its core.

We're well on our way to putting 100,000 new police officers on the street, ahead of schedule. And as the Vice President just told us, crime rates are dropping all across America to a 25-year low. Violent crime is down; property crime is down; and murder is down dramatically. From the crime bill to the Brady bill, from the assault weapons ban to the Violence Against Women Act, our strategy is showing results. And Americans should take both pride and comfort in this progress.

But statistics tell only part of the story. The real measure of our progress is whether responsibility and respect for the law are on the rise. The real test of our resolve is whether parents can unlock their front doors with confidence and let their children play in the front yard without fear. And the fact remains that there are still far too many children in harm's way, too many families behind locked doors, too many guns in the hands of too many criminals.

No statistics can measure the pain or the brave resilience of the families shattered by gun violence. Some of them are here with us today, and I would like to acknowledge them, people like Dan Gross, Tawanna Matthews, Brian Miller, Byrl Phillips-Taylor. Byrl's 17-year-old son was killed with an AK-47. Tragedies like theirs are a brutal reminder of the task still before us. They are a challenge and a call to action that we as a nation cannot ignore, and I thank these people for being willing to continue the fight through their pain. Thank you very much, all of you. [*Applause*] Thank you.

If we are going to move forward in building a safer, stronger America, all of us, police and parents, communities and public officials, must work together. We must remain vigilant. Last November, I asked the Treasury Department to conduct the thorough review Secretary Rubin has just presented. That is why our administration has concluded that the import of assault weapons that use large-capacity military magazines should be banned. As everyone knows, you don't need an Uzi to go deer hunting. You don't need an AK-47 to go skeet shooting. These are military weapons, weapons of war. They were never meant for a day in the country, and they are certainly not meant for a night on the streets. Today we are working to make sure they stay off our streets.

Two successive administrations have acted on this principle. In 1989 President Bush banned the import of 43 semi-automatic assault rifles. In 1994 this administration banned the domestic manufacture of certain assault weapons. And in Congress, Senator Dianne Feinstein and the late Congressman Walter Capps led the fight against foreign gun manufacturers who evade the law. As long as those manufacturers can make minor

cosmetic modifications to weapons of war, our work is not done. And we must act swiftly and strongly.

That is what Secretary Rubin's announcement amounts to today. We are doing our best to say, you can read the fine print in our law and our regulations all you want, and you can keep making your minor changes, but we're going to do our best to keep our people alive and stop you from making a dollar in the wrong way.

It is our sworn duty to uphold the law, but it is also our moral obligation—our obligation to the children and families of law-abiding citizens, an obligation to stop the terrible scourge of gun violence. As parents, we teach our children every day to distinguish right from wrong. As a nation, we must also remember where to draw the line.

Today we draw it clearly and indelibly. If we do this, if we follow the recommendations set forth in this report, we chart the right course for America, toward a future more free of fear and a new century brimming with confidence and great promise.

Again, to all of you who played any role in this important day, I thank you on behalf of the people and the children and the future of the United States. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:55 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Raymond W. Kelly, Under Secretary of the Treasury for Enforcement; John W. Magaw, Director, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; and Iowa Attorney General Thomas J. Miller.

### **Remarks Honoring Major League Soccer Champions D.C. United and an Exchange With Reporters**

*April 6, 1998*

**The President.** Thank you very much. Welcome to the Rose Garden on this beautiful spring afternoon, Congresswoman Norton, Mrs. Barry, Councilman Evans.

In addition to being a magnificent spring day, this is also National Student Athlete Day. So I want to give a special welcome to those who have joined us to celebrate the achievements of students across the country. I want to thank Richard Lapchick, the direc-

tor of the Center for the Study of Sport in Society at Northeastern University, and Ron Stratten of the NCAA for your work to promote academics, athletics, and community service among our Nation's youth.

I also want to welcome Kevin Payne, the president and general manager of D.C. United, and Coach Bruce Arena and the members and the staff of this very talented team. You've all worked hard to make D.C. United the most successful team in Major League Soccer history, winners of the 1996 and 1997 MLS Cups. Each year, despite torrential rains during the championship games, you've shown us you are strongly united. And with a great record this season, you're well on your way to a "threepeat," something the law prevents me from trying to equal. [Laughter]

D.C. United and Major League Soccer are making soccer more and more popular in the United States, especially among young people. Last year a record 3.2 million children across our Nation played youth soccer, more than any other sport. My daughter taught me all I know about soccer. It was a great experience for me to watch her grow up in her soccer league, and I know it's making a difference in the lives of millions of children all across this country.

D.C. United is linking America to the world and the love of soccer in bringing Americans of all backgrounds together and, unless my ears have given out on me entirely, bringing some people beyond America together on this team. Last year, despite those rains, over 57,000 fans went to RFK Stadium to watch you win the championship. The D.C. United fans come from nearly every country on Earth. Their diversity and spirit add to the life of this, our Capital City, as I'm sure the representatives here would attest. Kevin Payne says that the fans are the 12th man in your winning efforts.

We can also all be proud of how united you are with the community of Washington, DC. Your partnership with DC Scores supports after school reading and writing programs, combined with the joys of playing soccer. And I'd like to give you a special thanks for that.

I also want to acknowledge the winners of that program's essays contest who are here