

That is why I have urged the Congress to pass the Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1999. This proposed legislation would strengthen existing Federal hate crimes law by covering crimes committed because of the victim's sexual orientation, gender, or disability, and by expanding the situations in which prosecutions can be brought for violent crimes perpetrated because of the victim's race, color, religion, or national origin.

As recent events have made clear, we must address intolerance early in life. We are reaching out to students in middle school— young people who are at an especially impressionable age—through a public-private partnership entitled “Dealing with Our Differences.” This partnership will develop a program to teach tolerance in the classroom, highlight positive ways in which adolescents are dealing with issues of diversity, and show the harmful impact intolerance causes in the daily lives of our youth. In an effort to understand better the problem of hate crimes and prejudice among young Americans, I have asked the Departments of Justice and Education to include in their annual report card on school safety a new section on hate crimes among our youth, whether they occur in school or elsewhere; and these departments will also collect and publish data regarding hate crimes and intolerance on college campuses.

During National Crime Victims' Rights Week, let us remember not only those who have suffered at the hands of criminals, but also those generous men and women who work each day to bring justice and healing to victims and their loved ones. Whether as victims' advocates, counselors, law enforcement personnel, prosecutors, or community volunteers, they reflect America's resolve to protect the rights of every citizen and to build a future where our differences no longer make us targets of hatred and intolerance. Let us also remember in our prayers the people of Littleton, Colorado. While it is still too early to determine the specific circumstances that led to this week's tragic events, it is never too soon to teach our children that violence and hatred are wrong and have no place in our schools or in our society.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America,

by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 25 through May 1, 1999, as National Crime Victims' Rights Week. I urge all Americans to remember crime victims and their families by working to reduce violence, to assist those harmed by crime, and to make our homes and communities safer places in which to live and raise our families.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 23, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on April 27.

Remarks on Departure for the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center and an Exchange With Reporters

April 23, 1999

School Safety

The President. Good morning. Before I leave to go to the NATO Summit this morning, I'd like to say just a few more words about the tragedy in Littleton and the steps we're taking to make all our schools safer.

The images from Colorado have become painfully familiar, the terrified children, the racing ambulances, the grieving families. We saw them last year, in Pearl, West Paducah, Jonesboro, Springfield. We were reminded again this week that none of our communities is immune to senseless violence.

Still, it is important to remember and to remind our children that the vast majority of our schools are safe. Nearly everywhere in America a child still is safer in school than anywhere else in the community.

But this week's tragedy reminds us again that one act of violence is one too many. We must do more to keep guns out of the hands of children, to help our young people express

their anger and alienation with words, not weapons, to prevent violence from shattering the peace of our schoolyards.

I've spoken to Attorney General Reno, who was at the scene yesterday to assist law enforcement in their investigation and to offer comfort to the students and the families. I also talked with Dr. DeStefano and the school board last evening for a few minutes to share some thoughts with them and to express my appreciation to them for their efforts.

The Justice Department today will make \$1½ million from our crime victims trust fund available to help the communities assist the victims in their long journey toward recovery. And we will do more.

Last October, at our White House Conference on School Safety, I launched a new initiative to bring more of the same community policing that is doing so much to reduce crime on our streets to our schools. Today I'm pleased to announce the first of the grants funding these community police will be awarded to 336 schools and communities to help hire more than 600 police officers. Like their counterparts on the streets, these school officers will work closely with the citizens they serve, with students, teachers, and parents, to improve campus security, to counsel troubled youth, to mediate conflicts before they escalate into violence.

I want to thank Senator Chuck Robb for his strong leadership on this issue. By the end of the year we hope to have 2,000 new officers in our schools, and I encourage all communities to apply for these grants.

I also want to take this opportunity to remind communities that they have until June the 1st to apply for the Federal Safe Schools-Healthy Students funds, to help them put in place comprehensive violence prevention programs. Those of you who were with me yesterday in Alexandria at T.C. Williams High School know how important the students there believe such a program is. These funds can be used for everything from establishing conflict resolution groups to hiring more mental health counselors, to establishing new mentoring programs, to installing metal detectors and other security equipment.

By taking actions to prevent future acts of violence in our schools we can best honor the memories of those who lost their lives.

Thank you very much.

Legislative Initiatives/Ground Troops in Kosovo

Q. Mr. President, you didn't mention gun control. Are you going to do more on gun control?

Q. To be clear, sir, do all hostilities in Kosovo have to end before there can be consideration of ground troops, sir?

The President. First of all, I know you understand I've got to run over there and meet all the people who are coming. We will have more legislative initiatives to announce in the days ahead. As I said a couple of days ago, we will have some legislative responses and efforts we have been working on for some time, actually.

On the other, I think our conditions are clear.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:18 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jon DeStefano, president, board of education, Jefferson County, CO.

Remarks at the Opening Session of the North Atlantic Council Meeting on Kosovo

April 23, 1999

Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary General. Mr. Secretary General, fellow leaders, let me begin by welcoming you warmly to the United States. We are honored to host this 50th Anniversary Summit of NATO. We meet to honor NATO's past, to chart its future, to reaffirm our mission in Kosovo, where NATO is defending our values and our vision of a Europe free, undivided, and at peace.

Today we send a clear message of unity and determination: to sustain our air campaign for as long as it takes; to stand firm in our conditions for ending it; to pursue diplomatic initiatives to meet those conditions; to increase political and economic pressure against the regime in Belgrade; to stand by