

Proclamation 7290—National Crime Victims' Rights Week, 2000

April 10, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

This week marks the 20th anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Over the past two decades, we have made enormous progress in our efforts to build safer communities and to reshape our criminal justice system so that it better protects victims' rights and responds more compassionately to their needs.

In the 7 years since I first proclaimed National Crime Victims' Rights Week, my Administration has worked hard to achieve some of the most progressive criminal justice reforms in our Nation's history. Recognizing the urgent plea from millions of Americans to restore safety and security to their neighborhoods, in 1994 I signed into law the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which funds 100,000 additional police officers to fight crime and protect our citizens. In Federal court cases, this law also gives victims of violent crime and sexual abuse the right to speak out in court before sentencing, providing them the opportunity to describe the impact such victimization has had on their lives. To help protect our communities from gun violence, we enacted the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, requiring background checks for potential handgun purchasers. Since its passage, more than 500,000 attempted gun purchases by felons, fugitives, and other prohibited persons have been prevented, saving an untold number of lives. And we worked to pass the assault weapons ban to keep these deadly firearms off our streets.

We also fought to pass the Violence Against Women Act, which addresses the complex dynamics of gender-motivated violence and seeks to ensure justice for women who live in daily fear for their safety and often for their lives. By providing support services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and empowering prosecutors with new tools to target offenders, we have

sent a clear message that our society will not tolerate violence against women.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of crime victims' advocates, many of whom are survivors themselves, government at all levels is focused on ensuring victims' rights. Today, all States have enacted laws safeguarding crime victims' rights in the criminal justice process, and 32 States have amended their constitutions accordingly.

Despite this progress, millions of Americans still fall prey to criminals each year. In the past year alone, gun violence alone has taken an enormous toll across our Nation. To address this, my Administration has proposed the 21st Century Policing Initiative to provide 50,000 more police officers for our streets, requested more funding for our Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative to reduce school and youth violence, and put forth the largest national gun enforcement initiative in our Nation's history. I continue to call on the Congress to strengthen our Nation's hate crime laws and to pass commonsense gun legislation to keep guns out of the wrong hands; and we should pass the Victims' Rights Amendment to the Constitution.

Criminal victimization is at its lowest level in 25 years, but we can do more. As we observe National Crime Victims' Rights Week, as we near the fifth anniversary of the tragic bombing in Oklahoma City and the first anniversary of the shooting at Columbine High School, let us vow to continue working together to prevent crime and violence. Let us also pledge to honor the needs and rights of victims whose lives have been forever altered by crime. And let us recognize the courage and determination of the thousands of men and women across our country who dedicate themselves daily to the protection of victims' rights.

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 9 to April 15, 2000, 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 communities and

homes safer places in which to live and raise our families.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this tenth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 13.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on Iraq's Compliance With United Nations Security Council Resolutions

April 10, 2000

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102-1), and as part of my effort to keep the Congress fully informed, I am reporting on the status of efforts to obtain Iraq's compliance with the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council. My last report, consistent with Public Law 102-1, was dated January 7, 2000. I shall continue to keep the Congress informed about this important issue.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Remarks at a Maryland State Bill Signing Ceremony in Annapolis, Maryland

April 11, 2000

Thank you very much, Governor and Mrs. Glendening, Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Secretary of State Willis, Attorney General Curran, Mr. Speaker, President Miller. I also want to acknowledge the Members of Congress who are here, who

are on the right side of this fight, Senator Mikulski, Representative Morella, and Representative Wynn. You can be very proud of what all three of them are doing on this issue.

I thank the members of the legislature, the overwhelming numbers of Democrats and the brave Republicans who joined you to pass this legislation. I thank the students from the Young Kids Against Violence and the Students Together Against Guns and from Largo and Potomac schools for their work. And I want to say a little more about each of you in a moment.

Let me say, I think it is fitting that we are here today in this magnificent old place where our forebears walked the halls more than 200 years ago. It's a site of firsts. The Speaker mentioned George Washington resigning his commission just a few steps from here. The State House was also the site of the ratification of the Treaty of Paris, which officially put an end to the Revolutionary War and marked the birth of our new Nation.

Today we are trying to end another kind of war, an ongoing struggle to reduce the staggering toll of violence on our citizens and especially on our children. The Maryland Legislature once again has made history, and I just want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. I came up here today more than anything else to say thank you.

I applaud first your Governor. I remember after I first met him—you know, he's sort of low-key; you have to keep listening to Parris Glendening. [Laughter] But I must say, he wears well. The more I watched him—I remember once, a couple years ago, I was talking to people at the White House about what was going on in the States about a completely different issue. And I said, "You know, it is astonishing; in almost everything I have tried to accomplish as President, Maryland has been out there on the forefront of change, ahead of the other States in virtually every area." And I might say, in the area of gun safety, it's worth pointing out for the record that Maryland has already banned assault weapons, cheap handguns known as Saturday night specials, already limited handgun sales to one per month, and with this new law, you are again leading the way.

Last year California passed legislation to limit handgun sales to one a month, to ban