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## WILLIAM J. CLINTON

XLII President of the United States: 1993-2001

### The President's Radio Address

October 26, 1996

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Good morning. Today I want to talk about what we must do to stand up for the rights and interests of crime victims as we work to combat crime. I'm announcing a major new effort to help the victims of crime, especially those who are the victims of gang violence.

We put in place an anticrime strategy that is both tough and smart: putting 100,000 police on our streets; toughened penalties; banning 19 deadly assault weapons; passed the Brady bill that's kept 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers from getting guns. Congress just answered my call to tell parolees, if you go back on drugs, you'll go back to jail.

We've greatly expanded the safe and drugfree schools program, so that in every classroom we can have good role models telling our young people constantly, drugs are dangerous, illegal, and wrong.

All across America this community-based strategy is working. Crime is coming down in every region, in every category. The FBI reports that crime in America has dropped 4 years in a row now. Last year there were one million fewer crime victims. Crime is at a 10-year low in our country, but it's still intolerably high. We can take some comfort in knowing we're moving in the right direction. And we have to keep going and finish the job.

But as we prevent crime and punish criminals, we must also always remember the victims of crime themselves. When you're a victim, especially a victim of violent crime, the losses you face go far beyond the money stolen or the property destroyed. We must do everything we can to help the victims of crime to make sure their voices are heard in the corridors of justice.

For nearly 20 years now, I've been involved in the fight for victims' rights. As attorney general of my State, I proposed legislation that compensates the victims of crime. As Governor, I signed legislation guaranteeing the right of victims to be present in the courtroom. As President, I've fought to protect victims. The Violence Against Women Act helps thousands of women who are victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault. We've helped open hundreds of new shelters for those fleeing domestic violence. And our toll-free hotline, 1-800-799-SAFE, has received nearly 60,000 calls.

I support a constitutional amendment to guarantee crime victims the right to attend and speak at court proceedings, sentencing, and parole hearings; the right to be told when a convict is released or escapes; and the right to restitution from the criminal.

Since 1984, our National Government has had a crime victims fund, which is distributed by State government. This fund helps to pay for medical bills, counseling, lost wages. It helps provide for advocacy for crime victims when their assailant is standing trial. This year alone, it has helped 2,500 grassroots victim assistance programs, setting up battered women's shelters, rape crisis centers, children's advocacy centers. These resources for crime victims come from those convicted of Federal crimes, not from the taxpayer.

Because of large prosecutions and criminal penalties sought by our administration, the resources available in this fund for crime victims have grown by 250 percent during our service here. And I am happy to report a major new infusion of resources for crime victims. Two weeks ago, a major agribusiness corporation agreed to pay \$100 million for criminal pricefixing violations. That's a fine 7 times larger than any previous antitrust fine. These penalties will now go to the crime victims fund. Earlier this year, a Japanese bank convicted of fraud paid \$340 million. These two huge fines will increase the crime victims fund by \$440 million, every penny to be used to help crime victims.

Already some of these funds are targeted to specific needs, including the victims of domestic violence, rape, or child abuse. I want this fund to focus on another key priority as well. Violent juvenile gangs can leave broken bodies and ruined neighborhoods in their wake. Children age 12 to 15 are the most likely victims of gang violence, and victims can be especially afraid to testify since they face not just a sole criminal but an organized gang. So today I'm challenging States to earmark 10 percent of the new resources from these huge new criminal fines—that's about \$44 million—to help victims of gang violence and to keep gang violence from spreading.

We can help groups like Teens on Target in Los Angeles and Oakland, California, which help gang victims, many of them disabled, speak to thousands of schoolchildren each year to warn the children about the dangers of gang life. We can teach our children right from wrong and keep them from following a path that only leads to a life of crime, disappointment, and destruction.

With the new resources from these recordsetting criminal fines, we can help the victims of crime and prevent gang violence. We're upholding the rule of law. We're putting crime victims where they belong, at the center of the criminal justice system, not on the outside looking in.

We're making real progress in our fight against crime, but we still have a lot of work to do. If we'll come together as a national community to stand by those who have been caught in the crossfire, to take crime out of politics and put the focus back on people, protecting them and making their future

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brighter, we will move together into the 21st century stronger and more united and safer than ever before.

Thanks for listening.

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*NOTE: The address was recorded at 2:54 p.m. on October 25 at Paschal's Motor Hotel in Atlanta, GA, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 26.*

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