

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 10, 1993

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The recent abduction and murder of 12-year old Polly Klaas and this week's horrifying massacre on the Long Island Railroad commuter train serve to underscore what all Americans know all too well: that anyone can be a victim and that no one is safe from the scourge of violent crime.

As you know, Senate Republicans and Democrats were able to put aside their partisan differences and pass perhaps the toughest anticrime bill ever considered by Congress. The next step in the legislative process is a joint Senate-House conference to sort out the differences between the Senate bill and several weaker bills recently passed by the House of Representatives.

At this time, the American people need your leadership. It is crucial that you use the resources of your office to ensure that the Senate-House conference committee embraces the provisions contained in the Senate-passed anticrime bill, including:

- * a truth-in-sentencing proposal that will help slam shut the revolving prison door by requiring that violent criminals serve at least 85% of their prison sentences;
- * the construction of ten new regional prisons to which states can send their most violent criminals;
- * tough mandatory minimum penalties for those who use or carry a gun in the commission of a crime, including 10 years for carrying a gun, 20 years if the gun is discharged, and life imprisonment without parole or the death penalty, if the crime results in the death of an innocent victim;
- * a new anti-gang statute that will enable federal prosecutors to root out violent gang activity;
- * the death penalty for drug kingpins;
- * a "troops-to-cops" program that will enable members of the

Armed Forces to continue their service to America through community policing on state and local police forces;

- * a "three-time loser" provision that imposes life imprisonment without parole for anyone convicted in federal court of a third violent crime; and
- * a series of important measures designed to combat domestic and street violence against women, including the creation of three new Federal Rules of Evidence allowing for the admissibility of past sex offenses in sexual assault and child molestation cases.

Mr. President, these proposals can make a real difference in the war against crime. They deserve your unqualified and public support. Indeed, if truth-in-sentencing were a reality today, Polly Klaas would still have a childhood and a future: press reports indicate that her alleged murderer was a twice-convicted kidnapper who was paroled after serving just eight years of a 16-year sentence.

In addition, we hope you would join us in resurrecting at least two provisions that were passed by the Senate but dropped from the final version of the Brady Bill. The first provision addresses the real problem of preventing those who have been adjudicated "mentally incompetent" from purchasing or possessing a firearm. As we understand your statement at the Brady Bill signing, a friend of yours who sold a firearm to someone released from a mental institution would have been alerted under this provision.

The second provision imposes strict mandatory minimum sentences on the most premeditated violent offenders in society--those who commit armed robberies of gun stores.

Finally, it is imperative that the national computerized background check be started as soon as possible. While local authorities will no doubt do their best to review the backgrounds of potential purchasers of firearms during the waiting period, the bottom line is that the American people will not receive the protection they deserve until we have in place a nationwide database that includes the names of felons, illegal aliens, those dishonorably discharged from the military, and those adjudicated mentally incompetent.

And, Mr. President, the precursor of this database exists today: It contains the names of over 18 million subjects. Obviously, the files from the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Department of Defense could be quickly and easily added. The real waiting period is the period between today and the day on which we investigate the backgrounds of everyone attempting to purchase a firearm--whether it be a handgun or a long gun.

Needless to say, the time for action is now. The American people deserve the toughest anticrime bill possible, not a watered-down version or "Crime Bill Lite," as some Members of Congress would prefer. A public statement by you endorsing the proposals outlined in this letter would make a big difference as the Senate-House conference committee begins its deliberations.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,


BOB DOLE


ALFONSE M. D'AMATO

BD/ds