

Presidential Documents

Title 3—**Proclamation 7134 of October 7, 1998****The President****National Day of Concern About Young People and Gun Violence, 1998****By the President of the United States of America****A Proclamation**

During the past 18 months, Americans have been stunned by gun violence among our youth, including the tragic incidents of students shooting their classmates and teachers in Jonesboro, Arkansas; Pearl, Mississippi; Paducah, Kentucky; Edinboro, Pennsylvania; and Springfield, Oregon. In communities across the country, some young people are trying to resolve their conflicts and problems by taking a gun into their schools or onto the streets—guns that, although they are generally illegal for children to possess, are still too easy to get.

While recent data indicate that the overwhelming majority of American schools are safe and that the rate of youth violence is beginning to decline, we must not relax our efforts to protect our children from such violence. Since the beginning of my Administration, we have worked hard to make our schools and communities safe places for children to learn and grow. We have put more community police in our neighborhoods, encouraged the use of curfews, school uniforms, and tough truancy policies, and proposed funding for after-school programs that provide children and young people with wholesome activities that keep them interested, engaged, and off the streets. We instituted a policy of zero tolerance for guns in schools that is now the law in all 50 States. We have issued a guidebook to help teachers, principals, and parents recognize the early warning signs of troubled students and intervene before despair or anger gives way to violence. Later this month, I will host the first-ever White House Conference on School Safety to focus on the causes and prevention of youth violence and to share effective strategies that we can put into practice nationwide. Through these and many other measures, we have strived to protect America's youth from being either the perpetrators or the victims of gun violence.

While government can and must be an active partner in the effort to prevent youth violence, the real key to ending the killing is in the hands of young Americans themselves. Every young person must assume personal responsibility for avoiding violent confrontation, have the strength of character to walk away from a dispute before it turns deadly, and have the courage and common sense to refuse to participate in gang activities, to use drugs, or to carry or use a gun.

As part of our nationwide observance of National Day of Concern About Young People and Gun Violence, I urge students across America to voluntarily sign a "Student Pledge Against Gun Violence" as an acknowledgment of these responsibilities. This pledge is a solemn promise by young people never to bring a gun to school, never to use a gun to settle a dispute, and to discourage their friends from using guns. By keeping this promise and giving one another the chance to grow to healthy, productive adulthood, young Americans will be taking an enormous step toward a stronger, safer future for themselves and our Nation.

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 October 8, 1998, as a National Day of Concern About Young People and Gun Violence. On this day, I call upon all Americans to commit themselves anew to helping our young people avoid violence, to setting a good example, and to restoring our schools and neighborhoods as safe havens for learning and recreation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventh day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William J. Clinton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "W" and "C".

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