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## Presidential Documents

Proclamation 6888 of April 19, 1996

National Crime Victims' Rights Week, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

### A Proclamation

On April 19, 1995, millions of Americans witnessed the chaos and anguish wrought by a single bomb blast in Oklahoma City that took 168 lives and injured scores of others. For days afterwards, our Nation joined the survivors in a grim vigil as somber work crews entered the wreckage again and again to locate victims.

That bomb blast in Oklahoma City was a devastating reminder that too many Americans have become victims of crime. Although violent crime has decreased every year for the last 3 years, 83 percent of our citizens 12 years of age and above will experience violent or attempted violent crime in their lifetimes. And worse, 52 percent will be victimized more than once. Added to these grim statistics is the reality that violent crime is increasingly a problem of our youth. For 12- to 19-year-olds, the chance of being assaulted, robbed, or raped is two to three times higher than for adults, and perpetrators of crime are both younger and more violent. In 1994, for example, about 33 percent of all violent crimes were committed by those under 21 years of age.

There is another, more positive, dimension to the aftermath of crime: the multitude of dedicated professionals and volunteers who support and assist crime victims. They are emergency medical technicians and firefighters, law enforcement officers and rescue teams, victim assistance providers and shelter workers. At the darkest of moments, these selfless men and women renew our Nation's faith in humanity, and their advocacy embodies the time-honored American traditions of compassion and service. They constitute a community of caring whose healing work helps victims to become survivors. As a Nation, we owe these generous individuals our deepest gratitude for making our communities better and safer places in which to live and work.

While 1995 brought tragedy, it also brought the implementation of one of the most comprehensive crime laws ever enacted. The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 furthered the rights of victims in the Federal justice system and targeted resources for criminal justice improvements. The Crime Act's provisions include truth-in-sentencing provisions that ensure longer sentences for violent offenders and allocution rights for victims that give them the right to speak in court before the imposition of a sentence. The Crime Act also provides hundreds of communities around the Nation with increased law enforcement personnel, and its Violence Against Women Act is the first comprehensive Federal effort to combat violence against women.

The Crime Act is just one landmark in a crime victims' movement that has spanned 20 years and brought many hard-won reforms. A victims' bill of rights—once a novel idea—is now a reality in virtually every State. Victim assistance programs, which were few in the 1960s, now number in the thousands. Every State has a compensation program to help reimburse victims for mental health, medical, and other expenses resulting from the crimes committed against them. And in 1995, the Crime Victims Fund

in the U.S. Treasury, which supports many of these programs, surpassed the one-billion-dollar mark in funds collected and distributed to the States.

As we reflect on the events of 1995, let us remember both the horror and the compassion we felt last April. Let us not slip into complacency when we hear or read about another crime victim. Whether we are business owners or teachers, clergy or physicians, neighbors or colleagues, we must join the community of caring and lessen the burdens on our Nation's crime victims. Let us join together to build safe and responsive communities and to promote justice and healing for all who have suffered from violent crime.

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 21 through April 27, 1996, as National Crime Victims' Rights Week. I urge all Americans to pause and 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 nineteenth day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twentieth.

