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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
FILMED FOR THE NATIONAL COUNCIL
ON CRIME AND DELINQUENCY
PLAZA HOTEL, NEW YORK CITY

It is a pleasure for me to address this gathering of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency. I only regret that a tight schedule has forced me to appear on film instead of in person.

In a year when we as a Nation have begun to pay long-overdue attention to conserving our energy and natural resources, it is only fitting that we have also taken a major stride forward in preserving our greatest resource of all -- our Nation's youth.

It was in this spirit that, on September 7th, I signed S. 281, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, into law.

While not agreeing with all the provisions of the Act, I strongly believe in its over-all purpose. We must save as many of our young people as we can before they become trapped in a life of crime. And we owe every juvenile the full protection of his or her constitutional rights.

In signing this bill, I said that it represents a constructive effort to consolidate and make more efficient the various federal programs to assist states and localities in dealing with juvenile delinquency. The direction of our federal programs has been fragmented for too long.

This restructuring will better assist state and local governments to carry out the responsibilities in this field -- a responsibility which should remain at the local level. I also expressed the hope that the result will be greater security for all citizens and more purpose, sense and happiness in the lives of young Americans.

No group worked longer or harder for the passage of this milestone legislation than you have. No group deserves greater credit for transforming it from a goal to a reality.

I am proud that the signing of this measure was one of my earliest official acts as President of the United States -- and I salute you for your magnificent work in making it possible.

Again, I only regret that I cannot be with you in person this afternoon, speaking from the same rostrum as Francis Dale and Elliot Richardson.

The more all of us do to prevent juvenile crime, the more we protect its potential victims -- before, rather than after, the damage has been done.

You have my personal assurance that I am fully committed to meeting the federal government's fair and attainable share of this responsibility. Working together with the general public and state and local governments, we can make the year ahead another year of progress -- of making America a better, safer country for young and old alike.

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