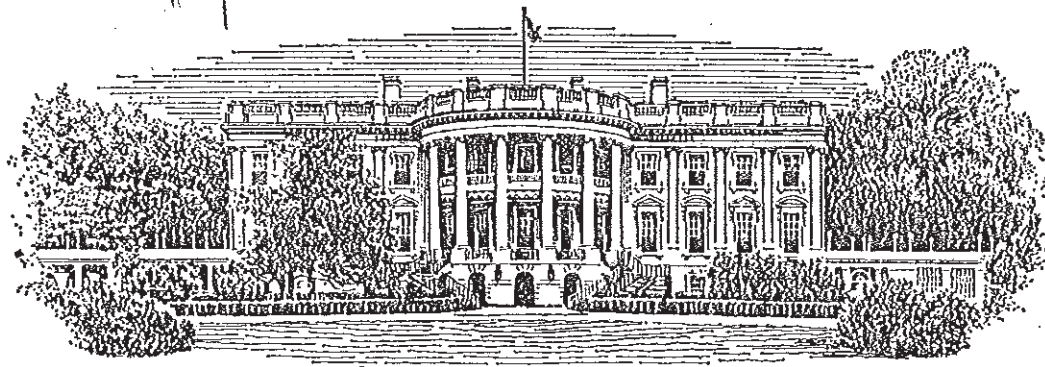


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OMNIBUS CRIME CONTROL AND SAFE STREETS ACT OF 1968

*Statement by the President Upon Signing the Bill, Together With His
Objections to Certain of Its Provisions. June 19, 1968*

The Safe Streets and Crime Control Act of 1968 has had a long journey.

The work behind the principal title of the act began in July 1965 when I appointed the National Crime Commission. The work of the Congress started more than 16 months ago, in February 1967, when I called upon it to strike a sure and swift blow against crime in America.

Now, almost 500 days later, the legislative process has run its full course. The measure before me carries out many of the objectives I sought. But it also contains several other provisions which are unwise and which will not aid effective law enforcement.

Over the past 10 days, I have given full consideration to this intricate, 110 page bill. I have carefully weighed the good features against the undesirable, the questions of law and policy it raises against the remedial actions I might take to resolve those questions, the immediate crisis of local law enforcement against the bill's response.

My decision has been made only after consulting with the wisest counselors available to the President. I have asked 11 Government departments and agency heads, including those most affected, such as the Attorney General, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, and the Mayor of the District of Columbia, for their views. No department has recommended veto. On the basis of their advice and my own searching examination, I have decided that this measure contains more good than bad and that I should sign it into law.

I sign the bill because it responds to one of the most urgent problems in America today—the problem of fighting crime in the local neighborhood and on the city street.

The program I recommended 16 months ago—the Safe Streets Act—is the heart of this measure.

My program was based on the most exhaustive study of crime ever undertaken in America—the work of the President's National Crime Commission. The Commission—composed of the Nation's leading criminologists, police chiefs, educators, and urban experts—spotlighted the weaknesses in our present system of law enforcement. It concluded that the States and local communities need large-scale Federal financial assistance to help them plan, organize, and mount a concerted and effective attack on crime.

The bill I sign today provides much of that urgently needed assistance. It will give help to the ill-equipped and poorly-trained policeman on the beat, to the overburdened courtroom, to the antiquated correctional institution. The legislation honors the deeply rooted principle that the Federal Government should supplement—but never supplant—local efforts and local responsibility to prevent and control crime.



This measure moves in new directions to fight crime by:

- Authorizing \$400 million in Federal grants over a 2-year period for planning and launching action programs to strengthen the sinews of local law enforcement—from police to prisons to parole.
- Creating a National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice to begin a modern research and development venture which will put science and the laboratory to work in the detection of criminals and the prevention of crime.
- Establishing a pioneering aid-to-education program of forgivable college loans and tuition grants to attract better law enforcement officers and give them better education and preparation.
- Providing greatly expanded training for State and local police officers at the National Academy of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
- Permitting Federal funds to be used to supplement police salaries and to encourage the specialized training of community service officers whose mission will be to ease tensions in ghetto neighborhoods.

These are among the prime advantages of this bill I sign today.

The measure also ends three decades of inaction on the problem of gun controls. Interstate traffic in handguns and their sales to minors will now be prohibited by law. The majority of all the murders by firearms in this Nation are committed by these small but deadly weapons.

But as I have told the Nation and the Congress repeatedly, this is only a halfway step toward the protection of our families and homes. We must go further and stop mail-order murder by rifle and shotgun. We must close a glaring loophole in the law by controlling the sale of these lethal weapons, as well as the sale of ammunition for all guns.

A week ago I submitted my proposal for more stringent safeguards. I asked, as I had before: "What in the name of conscience will it take to pass a truly effective gun control law?"

In the next few days, the Congress has the opportunity to answer that question. The call for action is compelling. We dare delay no longer. I urge the Congress to act on this bill immediately. I am asking the Attorney General to explore what further steps should be taken in the gun control area so that I may recommend them when the Congress has acted on the legislation I submitted last week.

Title III of this legislation deals with wiretapping and eavesdropping.

My views on this subject are clear. In a special message to Congress in 1967 and again this year, I called—in the Right of Privacy Act—for an end to the bugging and snooping that invade the privacy of citizens.

I urged that the Congress outlaw "all wiretapping and electronic eavesdropping, public and private, wherever and whenever it occurs." The only exceptions would be those instances where "the security of the Nation itself was at stake—and then only under the strictest safeguards."

In the bill I sign today, Congress has moved part of the way by

- banning all wiretapping and eavesdropping by private parties;
- prohibiting the sale and distribution of "listening-in" devices in interstate commerce.

But the Congress, in my judgment, has taken an unwise and potentially dangerous step by sanctioning eavesdropping and wiretapping by Federal, State, and local law officials in an almost unlimited variety of situations.

If we are not very careful and cautious in our planning, these legislative provisions could result in producing a nation of snoopers bending through the keyholes of the homes and offices in America, spying on our neighbors. No conversation in the sanctity of the bedroom or relayed over a copper telephone wire would be free of eavesdropping by those who say they want to ferret out crime.

Thus, I believe this action goes far beyond the effective and legitimate needs of law enforcement. The right of privacy is a valued right. But in a technologically advanced society, it is a vulnerable right. That is why we must strive to protect it all the more against erosion.

I call upon the Congress immediately to reconsider the unwise provisions of Title III and take steps to repeal them. I am directing the Attorney General to confer as soon as possible with the appropriate committee chairmen and warn them of the pitfalls that lie ahead, in the hope that the Congress will move to repeal the dangerous provisions of this title.

Until that can be accomplished we shall pursue—within the Federal Government—carefully designed safeguards to limit wiretapping and eavesdropping. The policy of this administration has been to confine wiretapping and eavesdropping to national security cases only—and then only with the approval of the Attorney General.

This policy, now in its third year, will continue in force. I have today directed the Attorney General to assure that this policy of privacy prevails and is followed by all Federal law enforcement officers.

Many States have protected the citizen against the invasion of privacy by making wiretapping illegal. I call upon the State and local authorities in the other States to apply the utmost restraint and caution if they exercise the broad powers of Title III. We need not surrender our privacy to win the war on crime.

Title II of the legislation deals with certain rules of evidence only in Federal criminal trials—which account for only 7 percent of the criminal felony prosecutions in this country. The provisions of Title II, vague and ambiguous as they are, can, I am advised by the Attorney General, be interpreted in harmony with the Constitution and Federal practices in this field will continue to conform to the Constitution.

Under long-standing policies, for example, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other Federal law enforcement agencies have consistently given suspects full and fair warning of their constitutional rights. I have asked the Attorney General and the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to assure that these policies will continue.

My overriding concern today, as it has been since the first day I became President, is for safe streets in America. I believe this measure, despite its shortcomings, will help to lift the stain of crime and the shadow of fear from the streets of our communities.

That promise, contained largely in Title I and in the reinforced gun control law I have asked for, must not be deterred.

I believe it is in America's interest that I sign this law today.



Crime will never yield to demagogic lament—only to action. With this measure, we are beginning to act. The Federal Government is taking a long overdue step.

But at a time when crime is on the tip of every American's tongue, we must remember that our protection rests essentially with local and State police officers. For of the 40,000 law enforcement agencies in this Nation, more than 39,750 are local, while some 200 are State and only the remaining 40-plus are Federal. Of the 371,000 full-time law enforcement officers in the Nation, 308,000 are local, while 40,000 are State and only 23,000 are Federal. The essential duties these 23,000 Federal officers are authorized by law to perform are to protect the President, ferret out crime in interstate commerce, investigate crime in interstate commerce, guard our borders, and enforce the tax and customs laws.

Today the Federal Government is acting. But action must now also come from the cities and counties and States across America.

The cities must increase the size of their police forces.

The cities must pay their law enforcement officials more.

The local communities must train them better.

The cities and the States must streamline their courts and correctional institutions.

Both the cities and States must plan with care and imagination to use the new Federal funds we will make available under the act I sign today.

Today, I ask every Governor, every mayor, and every county and city commissioner and councilman to examine the adequacy of their State and local law enforcement systems and to move promptly to support the policemen, the law enforcement officers, and the men who wage the war on crime day after day in all the streets and roads and alleys in America.

Most important of all, I call upon every citizen in this Nation to support their local police officials with respect and with the resources necessary to enable them to do their job for justice in America.

I call upon our church leaders and every parent to provide the spiritual and moral leadership necessary to make this a law-abiding Nation, with respect for the rights of others, respect for their system of government, and support for those charged with the responsibility of protecting our lives, our homes, and our liberties.

NOTE: As enacted, the bill (H.R. 5037) is Public Law 90-351.

U.S. Postage Stamps

*Statement by the President Upon Signing Bill
Permitting Black and White or Color Reproduction
of Stamps. June 20, 1968*

To be effective, laws must be in step with the needs of our people. An effective government of laws must not be burdened by the dead weight of past problems and obsolete provisions.

Today I am pleased to sign an amendment removing such a provision from our statute books.

In the past, it was illegal to reproduce United States postage stamps in color. Such reproduction, it was felt, might facilitate the work of counterfeiting.

Since stamp counterfeiting is today virtually nonexistent, this restriction is no longer necessary. There is no reason now why the full meaning and beauty of our postage stamps cannot be communicated to all the world in color reproduction.

On July 4th, for example, we will issue a beautiful series of 10 stamps depicting the history of our national flag. It is a magnificent history which the stamps portray colorfully and fittingly.