

**Remarks in Aurora, Colorado**

*July 22, 2012*

Good afternoon, everybody. I want to begin by just thanking all the State, local, and Federal officials who have responded magnificently to this tragedy.

Governor Hickenlooper, who has already been dealing with a range of natural disasters here in the State, has been an extraordinary example of strength. The mayor, who has only been on the job 7 months and obviously has responded with great strength and leadership. The police chief, who—we had an opportunity to speak over the phone—Chief Oates has been dealing with as difficult a set of circumstances as any law enforcement officer deals with, and he and his officers have done everything right, by the book, with great courage and great determination. And so we are very proud of them. And I think I speak for the entire congressional delegation who is here as well.

Scripture says that: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And when you have an opportunity to visit with families who have lost their loved ones—as I described to them, I come to them not so much as President as I do as a father and as a husband. And I think that the reason stories like this have such an impact on us is because we can all understand what it would be to have somebody that we love taken from us in this fashion: what it would be like and how it would impact us.

I had a chance to visit with each family, and most of the conversation was filled with memory. It was an opportunity for families to describe how wonderful their brother or their son or daughter was and the lives that they have touched and the dreams that they held for the future. I confessed to them that words are always inadequate in these kinds of situations, but that my main task was to serve as a representative of the entire country and let them know that we are thinking about them at this moment and will continue to think about them each and every day and that the awareness that not only all of America, but much of the world is thinking about them, might serve as some comfort.

I also tried to assure them that although the perpetrator of this evil act has received a lot of attention over the last couple of days, that attention will fade away. And in the end, after he has felt the full force of our justice system, what will be remembered are the good people who were impacted by this tragedy.

And I also had a chance to give folks some hugs and to shed some tears, but also to share some laughs as they remembered the wonderful lives that these men and women represented.

I also had a chance, fortunately, to visit some folks who are going to be okay, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of the staff at this hospital. And I just want to thank everybody who's worked tirelessly here to deal with this tragedy.

Some of the stories are remarkable. You see young people who've come in and just 2 days ago or 36 hours ago or even 24 hours ago, it wasn't certain whether they'd make it. And now suddenly, their eyes are open, they're alert, and they're talking. And it reminds you that even in the darkest of days, life continues and people are strong and people bounce back and people are resilient. And particularly, given the fact that so many of the victims were young, it is a great blessing to see how rapidly they're able to recover from some pretty devastating injuries.

There's one particular story I want to tell because this was the last visit that I had and I think it's representative of everything that I saw and heard today. I had a chance, just now, about 5 minutes ago, to visit with Allie Young—Allie is 19 years old—and I also had a chance to visit with Allie's best friend, Stephanie Davies, who's 21. Stephanie was actually downstairs with Allie as well as Allie's parents when I walked into the room.

And I don't think this story has been heard—at least I hadn't read it yet—but I wanted to share it with you. When the gunman initially came in and threw the canisters, he threw them only a few feet away from Allie and Stephanie, who were sitting there watching the film. Allie stood up, seeing that she might need to do something or at least warn the other people who were there. And she was immediately shot. And she was shot in the neck, and it punctured a vein, and immediately, she started spurting blood.

And apparently, as she dropped down on the floor, Stephanie—21 years old—had the presence of mind to drop down on the ground with her, pull her out of the aisle, place her fingers over where she—where Allie had been wounded and applied pressure the entire time while the gunman was still shooting. Allie told Stephanie she needed to run. Stephanie refused to go, instead, actually, with her other hand, called 911 on her cell phone.

Once the SWAT team came in, they were still trying to clear the theater. Stephanie then, with the help of several others, carries Allie across two parking lots to where the ambulance is waiting. And because of Stephanie's timely actions, I just had a conversation with Allie downstairs, and she is going to be fine.

I don't know how many people at any age would have the presence of mind that Stephanie did or the courage that Allie showed. And so, as tragic as the circumstances of what we've seen today are, as heartbreaking as it is for the families, it's worth us spending most of our time reflecting on young Americans like Allie and Stephanie, because they represent what's best in us and they assure us that out of this darkness a brighter day is going to come.

To the entire community of Aurora, the country is thinking of you. I know that there's going to be a vigil and an opportunity for everybody to come together. And I hope that all those who are in attendance understand that the entire country will be there in prayer and reflection today.

So thank you. God bless you. God bless all who helped to respond to this tragedy. And I hope that over the next several days, next several weeks, and next several months, we all reflect on how we can do something about some of the senseless violence that ends up marring this country, but also reflect on all the wonderful people who make this the greatest country on Earth.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:40 p.m. at the University of Colorado Hospital. In his remarks, he referred to Steven Hogan, mayor, and Daniel J. Oates, chief of police, Aurora, CO; and James E. Holmes, accused gunman in the July 20 shootings at the Century 16 multiplex in Aurora, CO.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Aurora, CO.

*Locations:* Aurora, CO.

*Names:* Davies, Stephanie; Hickenlooper, John W.; Hogan, Steven; Holmes, James E.; Oates, Daniel J.; Young, Allie.

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