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Subject: 1998-2-20 remarks on Patient's Bill of Rights on health

## THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

February 20, 1998

### REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT IN ANNOUNCEMENT OF HEALTH CARE PROTECTIONS

Holiday Senior Park Center

Wheaton,  
Maryland

11:00 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President. I want to thank all of you for being here today and particularly those of you who have been active in health care. I thank Secretary Shalala and Deputy Secretary Higgins and Secretary Herman, who has worked very hard on this; and Hershel Gober, the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs; Janice Lachance and Nancy Ann Min DeParle, all the people who are here from the administration. General Hill, thank you for being here.

I'd like to thank County Council President Leggett and all the local officials who are here. A special word of thanks to Chris Jennings in the White House. You know, the staff people who work on these things never get enough credit. This is great -- the Vice President and I get up here and we give these speeches, and you think how wise we are. (Laughter.) And the truth is -- (laughter) -- there is always somebody making us look smarter than we are. And I'm very grateful to all the people who worked on this, who passionately care about you and people like you all over this country

who never get the acknowledgements they deserve.

I thank Beth Layton and all the people here at Holiday Park for the work you're doing. I've been feeling very sentimental here. Twenty-one years ago, I'm almost sure it was 21 years ago this month, when I was a very young public official in my very first office of service, I had the state's first conference on senior citizens affairs. I never will forget it. I had it in the same place where I had my high school prom. (Laughter.) And now I have my AARP card. (Laughter.) I'm amazed at how far-sighted I was back then to be concerned about this. (Applause.)

I thank Marty Wish for his remarkable statement, and for reminding us why we're working so hard. The first person I heard tell that story about As Good As It Gets was the Vice President. And every time anybody sees that movie they always cheer. I understand it's going to be disqualified for an Academy Award because it's too close to real life. (Laughter.)

I want to thank Representative Morella and Representative Stark for being here, and for their efforts to make health care quality a bipartisan American issue, not a partisan political issue. And I thank you both for being here. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

We were going to have one other person here today, a woman named Dian Bower from California, whose son has a very serious illness that's being treated in a veterans military -- excuse me, a military managed care program. And she's very well satisfied with it, but passionately committed to the concept of a Patient's Bill of Rights. But because of the very difficult weather our fellow Americans in California have been experiencing -- I'm sure you've

been keeping up with it -- she was unable to come. But I would like to thank her for efforts to be here.

I'm pleased to accept this report from the Vice President. I just have to say one word about him. I asked the Vice President to undertake a very -- what appeared to be a completely thankless job. When we took office, we had a deficit of \$290 billion, and I said, look, we have to find a way to reduce the federal payroll by a minimum of \$100,000, and we have to do it without throwing anybody in the streets, and we have to do it without losing the confidence of federal employees or breaking their morale, they have to feel good about this. In other words, I was asking him to take two and two and make three or five or something other than four.

And he worked with the federal employees groups. Five years later, with the strong support and work and partnership of the Fellow Employees Organization, the federal payroll is \$300,000 smaller than it was the day I took office. And -- and -- we have had good early retirement programs for the federal employee, we have

worked with them in a constructive way, the government is working better, and it has freed up money to invest in putting another 100,000 police on the street, in improving education and advancing the environment and doing all these things.

But as part of our philosophy of government, we want a government that is both smaller and more active, that gives people the tools to make the most of their own lives and acts as a catalyst for new ideas. And that's what we're doing here today. And this is perhaps the best example of all the wonderful work the Vice President has done in five years of reinventing government, of how you can have a government that's smaller and still does more to meet the real needs of the American people. So I want to thank him for that. (Applause.)

What this report does is point out that we are quite close to making sure that our federal health plans actually comply with the Patient's Bill of Rights that I have proposed. And today after I speak I am going to sign a directive over here on this desk which directs all our federal agencies to finish the job by taking the necessary steps outlined in the Vice President's report to me.

Now, I want you to understand clearly what this will mean -- just this action will mean to the lives of the American people. With the authority of the federal government we will ensure that a third of all Americans -- a third of all Americans -- are protected by a Patient's Bill of Rights. Now, that's every person on Medicare, every person on Medicaid, including children and people with disabilities, all of our federal employees and their families that are covered, all of our military personnel, and members of the biggest health care system in America -- all of our veterans and all their families.

A third of the American people will have now a Patient's Bill of Rights that says this: You have the right to know all your medical options, not just the cheapest. You have a right to choose a specialist for the care you need. You have the right to emergency room care wherever and whenever you need it. You have the right to keep your medical records confidential -- very important. You have the right to bring a formal grievance or appeal of a health care decision with which you disagree.

And we are proving we can make these rights real now for nearly 90 million Americans. That's how many people we're talking about. And we can do this without increasing the deficit, without burdening the system or consumers. With this step we are setting a standard for the nation.

But we must not stop here. And that's why I am so glad to see Congresswoman Morella and Congressman Stark here, because now the Congress must pass national legislation to protect all Americans with a Patient's Bill of Rights. We are doing all we can do here

with the stroke of the President's pen, but it should be an example that the rest of America should follow.

I know there will be voices of opposition in the Congress and in the health care industry. But every American deserves the protection of a Patient's Bill of Rights. Those of you who are retired fellow employees who are still under a plan, you will be covered today. I bet you feel just as strongly as you did before I came here to sign this that everybody whose not in a plan you're in deserves the same protection. And we need to be clear and unambiguous about that.

I look forward to working together with members of Congress in both parties who have shown the determination to do something about this. This Patient's Bill of Right is in keeping with our profoundest obligations to our parents, to our children, to the neediest, to the most vulnerable among us -- in keeping with our oldest ideals enshrined in the Bill of Rights, and it is an essential part of our effort and our obligation to strengthen our nation for the 21st century.

We want the benefits of managed care. We all like it when health care inflation is not going up at three and four and five times the rate of inflation. It gives all of you who are on fixed incomes more disposable income for other things that are terribly important to you. But we must never, ever, ever sacrifice the fundamental quality of care and the security that gives people, knowing that they live in a country that not only has the best health care system in the world in theory, it's the best in the world, in fact, in their lives. (Applause).

Now, Vice President talks about some of the things we have been doing in the last several years. A couple of years ago, Congress passed a law I strongly supported that says you can't lose your health insurance if you change jobs because someone in your family has been sick. The balanced budget amendment that I signed into law last year extends the Medicare trust fund until 2010. And we now have a Medicare Commission meeting and working on how to preserve and protect Medicare well into the 21st century.

The balanced budget law also contains an unprecedented \$24 billion over the next five years to add up to 5 million more children to the ranks of the insured. And we're working with the states to do that. And Secretary Shalala is doing a great job in working with the states to make sure that we pick up more of these kids that don't have any health insurance. And just last week I directed federal agencies with programs with children to do more to enroll children as quickly as possible.

This Patient's Bill of Rights is the next important step, to make sure every American family has the quality health care all families need to thrive. It's especially important as our health care system continues to change.

Now, 35 years ago, President Kennedy proposed a Consumer Bill of Rights to protect Americans from unsafe products. He said, we share an obligation to protect the common interests in every decision we make. Those rights are still protecting us today, those consumer rights. Every time we rent a car or use a credit card or buy a toy for a child, the rights we are helping here to establish with the Patient's Bill of Rights will protect our children and our grandchildren 35 years from now and beyond.

This is a good day for America, and I am proud to sign the executive memorandum to ensure the Patient's Bill of Rights to nearly 90 million of our fellow citizens.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END

11:12 A.M. EST

Message Sent To: \_\_\_\_\_



SUNTUM M @ A1  
01/14/98 03:49:00 PM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

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Subject: 1998-1-14 health care bill of rights event

## THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 14, 1998

### REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AT DEMOCRATIC UNITY/HEALTH CARE BILL OF RIGHTS EVENT

The Grand Foyer

3:15 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Mr. Gephardt, Senator Daschle, Mr. Bowles -- thanks for hanging around. That will minimize our health care bills around here, I can assure you. (Laughter.) I thank the members of Congress for being here, and Deputy Secretary Higgins and Secretary Shalala. I'd like to especially thank two members who are here, Congressman Dingell and Congressman Stark, for their leadership on this vitally important issue.

If I could just very briefly, I'd like to put this issue into the larger context of what we're doing as a nation at this moment in history. If you look at the history of America, I think it's fair to say that we have not only survived, but prospered and grown increasingly stronger over 200 years because we have found a way at every moment of challenge and change, to make the adjustments necessary to preserve our enduring values in a new set of circumstances. And we have done it by strengthening our union and by applying the elemental principles of the Constitution and the fundamental values of the country to a new time. That's essentially what we're being called upon to do today.

I have said for six years now that, to me, all of our policies should be able to be explained in terms of three words:

opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and a community that includes all Americans. Now, we know that because of the changes we're undergoing in the way people work and live and relate to each other and the rest of the world, the way all our major systems work because of globalization and the revolution in information and technology, that we are having to systematically reform virtually every major institution of society.

We've dramatically reformed the way the government works. It's as small as it was now when President Kennedy was here. I would argue it's doing more with greater impact in a positive way. We're in the process of trying to create a system of lifetime learning in America, opening doors of college to all Americans and raising the standards of all of our schools and trying some different things that have not been previously done before.

We're trying to help people balance work and family. That's what the Family and Medical Leave Act was all about, and raising the minimum wage and the Earned Income Tax Credit and all those things. We're trying to make sure we can preserve the economy -- preserve the environment while we grow the economy. And I would argue that we've demonstrated with a different approach you can do both things quite well.

But all of this requires, anyway, a sense of purpose, to make sure that nobody gets left behind and that we really do change our institutions that protect the public interest as circumstances change.

That's basically what all these stories are about. I mean, the story that Mr. Gephardt told from the movie "As Good as it Gets" I remember very well, too -- is basically the story of a hard-working woman who is doing everything she's been asked to do by this country, gets up every day, goes to work, doesn't make a lot of money, obeys the law, does her best to take care of her kid, has done what she thought was right to provide health insurance to her child, and the system is not working for her. That means that we have not succeeded in reform. Yes, we've made a lot of progress in health care reform, but we've got a long way to go.

I think we were right to propose to extend Medicare coverage to people who can buy into it who are over 62 and have lost their health insurance, or people who are over 55 who have been downsized or promised health care that they didn't get from their companies. I think that's important.

But this is really important. Why? Because so many people are in managed care and there are so many stories like the one that Senator Daschle told. And again, I would say to you, to me this can -- what we should do can be answered in terms of those three little words I've tried to drill into the American consciousness for three years. You say to managed care people, okay, we have to

reorganize the health care market and you want the opportunity to sell your policies. Okay, you have that opportunity; you now have the responsibility to make sure when you sell a policy to somebody, they get quality health care. And we have to have an American community that's as healthy as possible. So it hurts us all if people are shelling out money for health insurance policies and they and their children can't get the right kind of health care.

We are all diminished by the story that Tom Daschle just told. That's not the America we want to live in. That's not the America we want to represent. That's not the America we want to lift up for the rest of the world. Now, that's what this is all about.

So I know there will be objections to this, but there are objections to every time you want to make a fundamental change. You know, there were objections to our efforts to get the budget under control. The deficit was supposed to be \$357 billion this year when I took office. It's going to be less than \$23 billion, and next year we'll offer a balanced budget. I mean, I'll offer one this year for next year and we'll have it. There are always objections to anything you do. But the point is, we couldn't go on doing what we were doing because it was unacceptable. It violated our notions of responsibility, we were depriving too many people of opportunity, and we were clearly undermining the future strength of our American community.

That's the circumstance here. We simply cannot go on giving -- we all know people who run managed care plans are under pressure. We know that we finally succeeded, thanks in some measure to managed care, in taming the inflation beast in health care for the last few years and that people that run these plans are under great pressures now. We understand that there may not be easy answers to all these things. But the bottom line is, you cannot justify putting people who pay their insurance premiums, and are working hard, and are trying to take care of themselves and their children, at the kind of risk that so many Americans are at risk of today because they don't have the consumer protections that ought to be elemental in a society like this. And we have to pass this bill because of the dramatic reorganization of health care relationships in America. And we're either going to do it and strengthen our sense of community and strengthen our future, or we're not.

Now, do we all need to listen to what the practical problems, should we have a good debate? Of course, we should. But the fundamental truth is everybody knows that this is a public interest issue, that the people who are in these plans cannot protect their own interest unless they band together as citizens, and unless their elected representatives create a framework in which they can get the health care they deserve and that they're paying for. That's the fundamental truth. You can argue about the details until the cows come home, but we have to make this change because of the changes in the American health care market.

And I have been very heartened by the fact that many members of the Republican Party have expressed support for similar actions, and I'm hoping that we can get a big bipartisan vote for this bill. But if you look throughout the 20th century, the mission of our party, from the beginning of this century, has been to push the changes that need to be made to preserve the basic values of this country in new circumstances. That has been our mission. And we are here today, together, to fulfill that mission.

I believe we'll succeed. I hope we'll have as much Republican support as possible. But every person here and every person that will hear about this, in their heart of hearts -- I don't care what they do for a living or what their position might be, their immediate financial interest -- everybody knows there have been dramatic changes in the health care delivery system in America that require a change in the framework of protection for ordinary citizens. And we are determined to give it to them.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Q Mr. President --

Q Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: Have we got a shouting contest here?

Q It's a shouting contest. Do you believe Iraq when it said that it is not experimenting with biological weapons on human beings?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't know what the facts are, but I think Mr. Butler's concerns are clearly what justifies the inspection regime. In other words, no American has to decide whether he or she believes Iraq or not, and no American can possibly know whether Mr. Butler is right or not, because all he said is he wants to take a look-see.

There is a framework for inspections. I am very encouraged, by the way, that we got a good statement out of the United Nations Security Council today. It is clear that the international community knows that Saddam Hussein is doing the wrong thing. And we have got to remain steadfast in our determination to continue the inspections process in a nonpolitical way where the leader of Iraq does not get to determine who, when, and what is going on in that inspections process.

I don't know the answer to your question, but I do know that we ought to be able to find out. That's what the U.N. resolution says.

Q Tariq Aziz says it's a lie.

Q Mr. President, you're clearly in the better position, though, than the most to assess the credibility of those

allegations. How seriously should people view the possibility that Iraq could experiment on human beings?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, if Mr. Butler says that he believes that he's got enough to go on we should view it seriously enough to insist that the inspections go forward.

We don't want to do them like they've done us, like they did the head of the inspection team, the American head of the inspection team, where they accused him of being a spy. And we didn't -- the United States government doesn't even know who is on what team from a day-to-day basis. They're all picked by the United Nations. So we don't want to convict them in advance. But if there is enough evidence for Mr. Butler to say that, then he ought to be able to go look.

I would remind you that in 1995, they admitted having stocks of chemical and biological weapons potential that were very troubling -- that they admitted. So that's another reason we've got to keep going and continue these inspections. This is a case where the United Nations actually had it right, they've got a good framework. And we just need everybody to stiffen their resolve now so we can go back and do our jobs. And we have to be absolutely resolute in insisting that it be done.

Thank you very much.

Q Senator Lott says that you won't get tobacco legislation because it's your fault. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: I've missed you. (Laughter and applause.)

END

3:26

P.M. EST

Message Sent To:

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Charlie Norwood

# Protection For Patients

A large number of Washington conservatives need to spend a lot more time with working people across America and a lot less time with lobbyists and politicians. For it appears that far from being defenders of individual freedom, they have convinced themselves that at least in terms of the debate on managed-care reform, the only freedom that counts is the freedom of corporations.

In fact, average working families are just as opposed to big business running their lives as they are to big governments. But inside-the-Beltway conservative leaders and journalists are still fighting the policy battles of the '60s and '70s, and ignoring the changing economic conditions of the '90s.

Robert Novak writes that my bill, the patient Access to Responsible Care Act (PARCA), "fits the president's covert plans for big government" ("A Health Care Bill That's DOA," op-ed, Feb. 2). In fact, the bill seeks to restore the free market in health care that has been taken away by acts of Congress.

Americans disapproved of the 1994 Clinton health care plan because they didn't want to give up their health care freedom to the federal government. The plan called for pushing the

Novak mentions that nationwide audiences are cheering criticism of HMOs in the new Jack Nicholson film, "As Good as It Gets." There's a reason for it. Nationwide audiences support patient protections in managed-care plans. They want their health care freedom back, and they demand that those who provide their health care are legally responsible when something goes wrong.

This is the line in the sand in this debate. Patients must have the final say in choosing their doctor and health plan, and managed-care plans must be held legally responsible for damages caused by denial of promised and medically necessary care.

Health insurance is the only industry in this country that enjoys a federally mandated shield against liability for its actions, and that's the root of the horror stories of managed care. It's interesting to note that those who oppose reform because of their dislike of government involvement don't have a bit of problem supporting this kind of deadly federal involvement in the health care market.

The Republican leadership has to recognize that "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" applies to all Americans, not just the business community. If they don't, these folks may find that their hold on the majority in Congress may be the next victim of managed care.

*The writer, a Republican representative from Georgia, is sponsor of the patient access legislation.*

## Taking Exception

public into one of eight "regional alliances," each consisting of a handful of managed-care organizations that would ration health care.

It's now 1998, and 70 percent of the American public has been pushed into the same managed-care plans by business interests. That figure continues to rise, and if the opponents of managed-care reform are successful, health care freedom for the working class will consist only of the freedom to quit your job if you don't like its health plan.

The Wall Street variety of Republicans seem to think that Clinton Care is just fine, as long as corporations run the show instead of the federal government. If they don't have a change of heart, they will soon discover at the polls just how out of touch with the electorate they truly are.

The Washington Post

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1998

David S. Broder

## If Clinton Has Lied

The mail is fascinating these days for the insights it offers into the way the American public is wrestling with the confusing and disturbing information coming out of Washington. You can see why the president's approval scores have been so high—and why he still remains in jeopardy.

For the moment at least, hard-core Democrats accept Hillary Clinton's contention that this is a "right-wing conspiracy." A woman from Tennessee writes, "I believe from the beginning Paula Jones and Gennifer Flowers were bought and paid for by the Republican Party and the Religious Right. . . . Both women are liars."

Many others, particularly among the boomers and Generation X, bury their doubts about Clinton beneath their deep distaste for self-appointed moral monitors. They write, as a Cincinnati man did, of "inquisitor" Kenneth Starr. And they say, in the words of an upstate New York man:

"Consider this. If all the married persons working in any city or county, in Congress, in any large church, TV network or anywhere else who are playing around with somebody of the opposite sex were fired from their jobs, the unemployment rate would soar."

Half of marriages end in divorce, with adultery a factor in many of the breakups. Other marriages are tested by infidelities but survive. The American people may not condone extramarital affairs, but many of them admire couples who work through what Clinton has referred to as "troubles." The steadfast support Hillary Clinton has given her husband has built a powerful shield against public condemnation of the president.

Then there are the factors in the national environment that would work in favor of any president. The economy is strong, crime rates and welfare rolls are down. People sensibly ask: Why upset the apple cart?

The nation has a political and emotional investment in any twice-elected president. He is a known quantity. His accusers are people who popped up from nowhere. Their own actions raise doubts. They secretly tape each other, negotiate publicly for legal immunity, seek publicity or book contracts.

The press that echoes their charges is itself deeply suspect in many Americans' eyes. "Do newsmen get pleasure from putting President Clinton through the third degree?" a Wisconsin woman asks. "What power do they have to put him on trial?"

Some social critics say the support for Clinton reflects a deeply cynical public ready to abandon important values; to trade ethics for a fat paycheck. I don't agree. What we are seeing is the sensible conservatism of people who want to wait for the facts to emerge before they make up their minds.

My mail suggests the ultimate judgment may be harsh. A Floridian writes: "Bill Clinton's problem is reprehensible and possibly illegal behavior. Extramarital sex merely underlies and accentu-

ates the real problem." And from Washington state: "Personally, I don't give a damn if the president sleeps with sheep. That truly is between him and his wife. But I do care if he uses a star-struck intern for his personal pleasure. I do care if he lies to the American people."

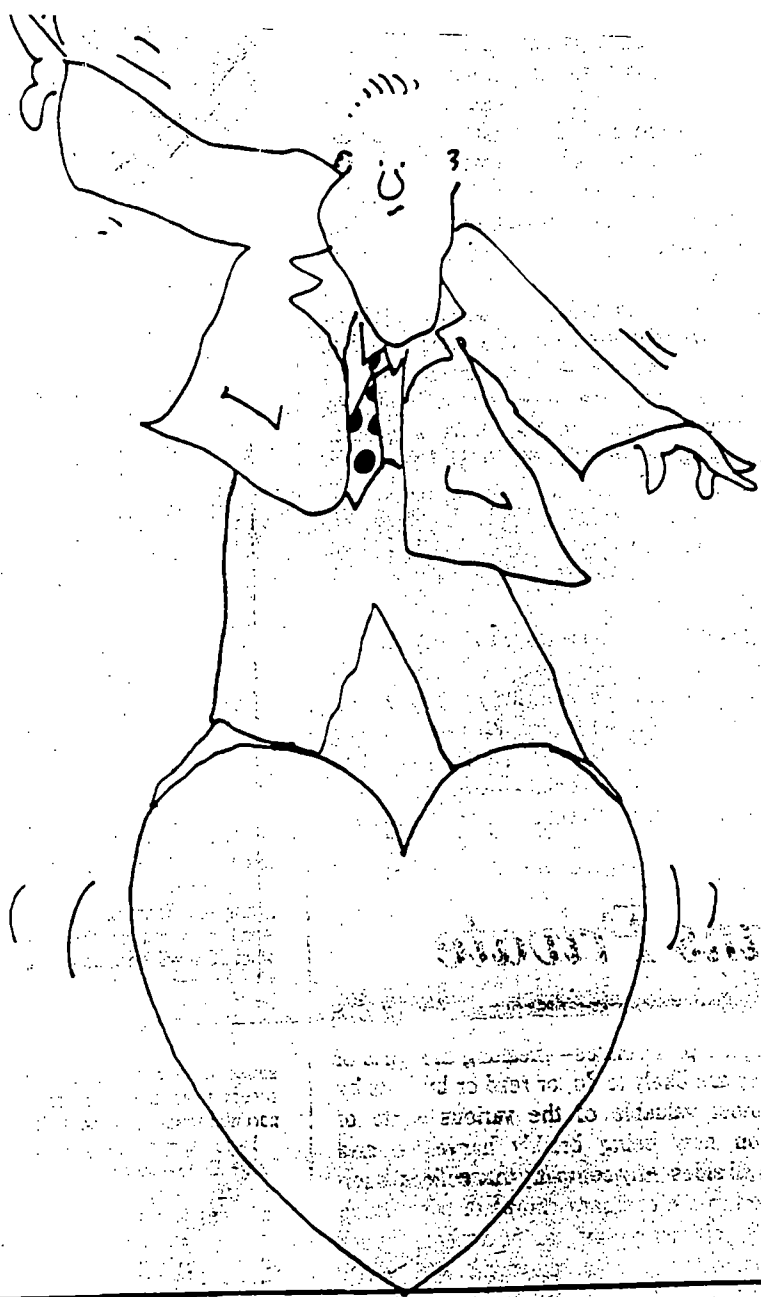
In the latest Washington Post-ABC News poll, those interviewed said by a 53 percent to 34 percent margin that they believe Clinton had an affair with Monica Lewinsky. But 60 percent said that even if he did, it is not important to them, and even more rejected an affair as a reason for removing Clinton from office.

More than eight out of 10, however, said that lying about the affair is more serious. So there is an obvious disconnect. If Clinton had an affair, his past denials to the public and to Paula Jones's lawyers are lies. The public, lacking clear proof, has not yet confronted that more serious charge. If

proof appears that the president has lied, Clinton may yet face Richard Nixon's fate.

We should not forget the one positive thing that emerged from the long ordeal of Watergate, the certain knowledge that Americans in the 1970s were as deeply committed to the fundamental idea of the Constitution—the rule of law—as the men who wrote the charter in the 1780s. It took months to puncture the public's desire to think well of a president they had but recently reelected. But once the facts were clear, Nixon quickly lost his political and popular support.

The rule of law requires any American to give truthful testimony when sworn as a witness in a legal proceeding. If it turns out that President Clinton has not done that, the props of public opinion now supporting him will collapse. I would bet anything that Americans will once again say no one is above the law.



BY T. GIBSON

# The Washington Post

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1998



**SUNTUM M @ A1**  
03/13/98 03:42:00 PM

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To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

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Subject: 1998-3-13 briefing by Chris Jennings and Barry Toiv

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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For Immediate Release

March 13, 1998

PRESS BRIEFING BY  
BARRY TOIV AND  
CHRIS JENNINGS,  
DEPUTY ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR HEALTH POLICY

The Briefing Room

1:42 P.M. EST

MR. TOIV: Before Mike comes out, why don't we have -- we are going to have Chris Jennings come to answer any questions you have about the health care event this afternoon. As you know, the President is receiving the report of the health care commission. We expect Mike down here pretty soon, though.

MR. JENNINGS: Good afternoon. I'm Chris Jennings, Deputy Assistant to the President for Health Policy. And I'm here to quickly brief you on the events this afternoon, and then any questions you may have.

The President is receiving the final report by the President's Advisory Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality. This is the report and it is available back there for any of you who are interested in it, as well as the Executive Summary. So you have plenty of paper to go through.

This commission has been one of the most successful commissions that any President has authorized. It was broadly based. It had representatives of businesses, of health plans, of consumers,

of physicians, of medical ethicists, of state experts, and others, and they came, as you know, on November 20, and reported on the Consumer Bill of Rights, which the President immediately endorsed and called on the Congress to pass; he continues to call on the Congress to pass, and is encouraged by a lot of bipartisan legislation being developed as we speak.

Today's report is focusing on going beyond consumer protections to quality. And the best way to explain this, because it can be a little bit detailed and sometimes policy-wonkish, but it has a really significant potential to move beyond -- bring a new paradigm in terms of health care policy. And by that I mean, when we talk about consumer protections we're talking about assuring you have access to specialists, when you go into the emergency room you get your coverage, and if you want to have an appeals rights because you disagree with your health plan you get it. That's something that assures health care.

But what the report -- the commission is providing today is moving on beyond assuring to improving health care. And by that, they are reporting about the wide variety of problems that are currently in the health care systems in terms of under-utilization of services, in terms of over-utilization of services, in terms of just errors that actually decrease health care outcomes and increase costs. And what the recommendation of the commission is to build on a whole new system of development of standards that improve our ability to learn from the medical outcomes research that is now happening, where we can find what works for the treatment of a particular disease and a particular malady; make sure that the health plan covers it and informs their professionals, their health care professionals, within that health care plan to provide that level of treatment; and then, and most importantly, measure and provide that

information to beneficiaries and enrollees around the countries so that when consumers are now choosing their health care plans, they're not just choosing on the basis of costs, they're not just choosing on the basis of what benefits are covering, they're choosing on the performance of their health plan, on the level of quality that their health plan is providing.

And that is a whole new system that has so much potential to not only decrease costs, because you're doing it right the first time, but also, of course, our number one priority is improve quality. And that's what this whole second report is. And you'll see that it's something that got a great deal of consensus; every single member of that commission endorsed the recommendations today and they are advocating for both legislation -- a combination of both a private sector approach and a public sector approach to begin to move towards having a national implementation of these recommendations.

First, they're recommending the development of a new council. That would probably require legislation. It would be

represented by both the public and the private sectors. The council would study to make sure we are making progress in our interventions. And the second is a private forum which would have representatives of both the public and private sectors, but would actually develop new standards and distribute it and make it user-friendly and applicable to the health care delivery system.

It really is a very, very exciting time in health care because we now are using the science that is now becoming available to us to apply that science and that outcome to the health care services that we receive today.

The President today is going to move forward and say, fine, let's move ahead with this report. He's going to receive it, he's going to endorse it and, of course, applaud the commission for its fine work. And then he's going to endorse it and suggest that any type of legislation on Consumer Bill of Rights will incorporate the recommendation of the commission. He's also going to be releasing an executive order, executive memorandum which establishes immediately a new interagency task force which ensures that all the agencies within the federal government -- whether it be from VA, DOD, HHS, Labor, OPM which administers the federal health employees plan who are developing these standards -- interact with one another, develop standards collectively and collaboratively, and move towards having a more rational and much more successful quality implementation regime.

That is something the President is very, very pleased to be signing today. And the second order he is going to do is he's going to request and instruct the Vice President kick off this new forum that the commission is recommending by holding its first meeting probably here on the White House grounds, but certainly -- probably in Washington in June, so that we can start this private-public private forum that the commission is recommending.

That essentially is it. You will see the Vice President will be out there. The report was delivered to the Vice President yesterday. He will be submitting it to the President and the President will be receiving it and endorsing it. It will just be the Vice President and the President and it will be in the Rose Garden and should be a nice ceremony.

With that, I'll answer any questions you may have.

Q Is there some sentiment in the report that the President's proposal of a Patient's Bill of Rights is not necessarily a good thing?

MR. JENNINGS: No, not at all. In fact, the Consumer Bill of Rights that -- the Patient's Bill of Rights that the President has called on the Congress to pass is based on the recommendations that the commission made in November. In that

report, they explicitly said that every health plan, every American should have that protection. What the President has said is if you're going to ensure that to be the case you're going to have to enact federal legislation to do that.

There are very few people who would suggest if you're going to provide and ensure that guarantee for all Americans that you could do it without federal legislation. But as you know, the commission chose not to decide how you should enforce these protections and they were operating on a pure consensus basis. I will say, of course, that the vast majority of every member of that commission would support -- not every member, but the vast majority of that commission, over three-fourths of them, would support federal legislation.

Q Would you explain -- a lot of Americans are not covered by health plans, but directly by self-insured plans run by their employers. Would what the President is proposing in terms of the Bill of Rights apply directly to companies that insure workers directly?

MR. JENNINGS: Absolutely. One of the problems with some of the states -- the states have passed a lot of laws in these areas; of course, not all states have. But they only apply to the insured plans, they don't apply to the self-insured plans. In fact, state laws don't apply to over 100 million Americans. You actually need to have federal legislation to take on the self-insured and the federally covered beneficiaries in this country.

Q So, just to follow up, companies wouldn't be required to offer health insurance or coverage to their workers, but if they offered it they would have to meet the standards --

MR. JENNINGS: Right. This is not a -- if you provide coverage, as the vast majority of employers do, you would ensure that their plans meet these standards.

And by the way, a lot of the business community, in terms of the actual protections themselves, are moving in that direction, too. They care about their employees, they're making progress in this area. But, of course, if you want to make sure that the public has the kind of confidence that we believe they are going to need to feel comfortable with this rapidly changing health care delivery system -- that they need to know that they have these consumer protections in place.

And then, secondly, they need to know that we are committed to improving the type of quality that we have in this health care delivery system through these recommendations that the commission is making today.

Q -- premiums go up to pay for the new rights --

MR. JENNINGS: Well, the Congressional Budget Office in



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## THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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For Immediate Release

March 13, 1998

### REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT ON HEALTH CARE QUALITY

The East Room

2:45 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Mr. Vice President, thank you for your work on this issue and your interest in it. I thank Secretary Shalala, Secretary Herman, Secretary West, the members of the White House staff who worked on this. But especially let me thank the members of the commission and the Executive Director of the commission, Janet Corrigan. They have done a remarkable citizen service for the people of the United States of America and we're all very grateful to them. (Applause.)

As we approach a new century with all its stunning advances in science and technology, we know that many of them will come in medicine and health. We must act now to spread these breakthroughs and improve the quality of health care for every American. I accept the commission's report. I endorse your recommendations.

For five years we have worked to expand access to quality health care for the American people, step by step: health insurance coverage for people who move between jobs; expanded health care coverage for millions of children; strengthened Medicare with more preventive benefits. Last year, as the Vice President said, this commission recommended a Patient's Bill of Rights. Last month I

acted to ensure by executive order that one-third of all Americans -- those in Medicare, Medicaid, veterans health care systems and other federal plans -- enjoy the benefits of this Patient's Bill of Rights.

Now these protections must be extended to all Americans. And in the remaining 68 days of this congressional session, Congress must take the next step and make the Patient's Bill of Rights the law of the land. (Applause.)

Now, as you have told America in this report, we must also seize this moment of opportunity to improve the quality of health care for all our people. For all its strengths, our health care system still is plagued by avoidable errors -- overused and underused procedures and gaps in the quality of care. For example, when hundreds of thousands of Americans are needlessly injured while in the hospital, when 18,000 Americans die of heart attacks that did not have to be fatal, when 80,000 women undergo unnecessary hysterectomies every year, surely we can do better.

This commission has drawn a road map for higher quality across American health care. Above all, our nation must develop uniform national standards so that health plans can compete on quality, not just cost; and so that health care consumers can judge for themselves. This is the best way to assure quality health care for all Americans.

We can take three steps to advance these high health care standards. First, health care quality standards should be set at a forum bringing together providers, business and labor,

consumers, insurers and government. I've asked the Vice President to convene this health care quality forum this June.

Second, I'm ordering federal agencies to create a task force to find ways to improve quality in the health care systems that we operate. The federal government must lead the way in lifting health care quality for all our people.

Third, I support this commission's recommendation to create a permanent Health Care Quality Council to set new goals and track our progress in meeting those goals. A council should be established by any health care quality legislation enacted this year.

We can make this year a time of real achievement in our mission to improve health care for every American. The American health care system has been the best in the world in the 20th century. If we press forward with medical research, enact a Patient's Bill of Rights, insist on high quality everywhere in America, continue to expand quality affordable coverage, protect and preserve Medicare and Medicaid, we can make American health care the

best in the world in the 21st century.

Now I intend to sign an executive order to all the relevant agencies to make sure they work together to develop the standards you recommend for quality health care, first for those whom we reach, and hopefully as a model for all Americans.

Again, I thank this commission. I ask the people and the members of the press here present to remember just the single instances I cited from the commission's report of examples where we still have serious quality changes. And I ask you all to rededicate yourself to this purpose on this day.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END

2:52 P.M. EST

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## PRESIDENT CLINTON: IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF HEALTH CARE

March 13, 1998

*"Our nation has the best health care system in the world. We have the best doctors, the most advanced technology, and the most exciting research. But we can make the American health care system even better. And as we approach the 21st Century, with all its stunning medical advances, we must act now to spread these breakthroughs and improve the quality of health care for every American."*

President Bill Clinton

March 13, 1998

Today, President Clinton accepts the final report from his Advisory Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality. The report calls for a health quality council to develop unprecedented national quality improvement goals and a privately-administered forum to develop new tools to empower consumers and businesses to purchase quality health care.

**Signing An Executive Memorandum.** To implement the Commission's recommendations, the President issues an Executive Memorandum directing five Federal agencies to immediately establish an interagency task force to ensure the Federal government takes the lead on improving health care quality.

**Directing Agencies To Coordinate And Improve Health Quality.** The President is directing the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, Veterans Affairs, Defense, and the Office of Personnel Management to immediately establish the "Quality Interagency Coordination" (QuIC) task force. This task force will ensure better collaboration and coordination across the Federal government.

**Improving Quality Health Care.** Each year, hundreds of thousands of Americans are injured and even die from avoidable medical errors in the health care system. Millions more receive unnecessary services or substandard care that add needless health complications and increase health care costs. Establishing uniform standards will help ensure that health plans finally begin to compete on the basis of quality -- not just costs and benefits. The President's Commission's recommends:

- Creating an Advisory Council for Health Care Quality, to establish, for the first time, national goals to improve health care quality and develop strategies to achieve them. The Council would emphasize areas such as ensuring consumers have access to clear information to make decisions about health plans and professionals, identifying strategies to reduce avoidable medical errors, reducing variation in health care services, and promoting evidence-based medicine.
- Creating a Health Care Forum, to bring together the public and private sectors to identify a core set of measures to be adopted by health plans across the country. This would ensure that, for the first time, consumers have a consistent set of standards so they can choose health plans based on quality -- not just on cost.

**Calling For A Patients' Bill Of Rights.** President Clinton is urging Congress to step up their efforts to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights this year. With fewer than 70 working days remaining in this legislative session, the President is calling on Congress not to adjourn without passing a Patients' Bill of Rights that includes important protections for patients such as: access to the specialists they need, access to

emergency room services, and an external appeals process to address grievances with their health plans.

**PRESIDENT CLINTON:  
HEALTH CARE FOR THE 21st CENTURY**

March 17, 1998

*"It is time to fulfill our obligation to older Americans. It is time to expand the availability of health care to those who need it most. This time of prosperity should not be a time of delay -- it should be a time of action."*

President Bill Clinton  
March 17, 1998

Today, President Clinton joins Democratic Members of Congress on Capitol Hill to unveil legislation that would provide greater health insurance options for an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 Americans ages 55 to 65.

**Protecting America's Most Vulnerable Population.** Adults ages 55 to 65 are part of one of the nation's most vulnerable and difficult to insure populations: they have less access to employer-based health insurance; they are twice as likely to have health problems; and they are at greater risk of losing coverage. Today, the President releases a state-by-state analysis that documents the difficulty that Americans in this age range have gaining access to health insurance. According to the report, twenty-two percent of Americans ages 55 to 65 -- a total of five million people -- are either uninsured or insured through the individual insurance market.

**Giving Americans New Choices To Gain Access To Health Care Coverage.** The legislation unveiled on the Hill today provides new health insurance options for Americans ages 55 to 65. This legislation, supported by the President, would:

- **Enable Americans ages 62 to 65 to buy into Medicare,** by paying a premium.
- **Provide displaced workers over 55 access to Medicare** by offering those who have involuntarily lost their jobs and their health care coverage a similar Medicare buy-in option.
- **Allow retirees, ages 55 and older, whose employers dropped their health coverage, access to their former employers' health plan** through "COBRA" coverage.

**Protecting Medicare For The Future.** The Congressional Budget Office recently released estimates showing that the Medicare buy-in proposal is a carefully targeted policy that will not burden the Medicare Trust Fund:

- **Paid for by premiums and anti-fraud and overpayment savings.** The costs associated with the proposal impose only temporary costs on the Medicare program, and are paid for -- dollar-for-dollar -- by a series of anti-fraud and anti-overpayment initiatives;

- **Separate Trust Fund.** While the buy-in takes advantage of Medicare's low administrative costs and choice of providers and plans, its financing is kept completely separate from the Medicare Trust Fund.

## PRESIDENT CLINTON: SAFE FOOD, HEALTHY FAMILIES

March 4, 1998

*"Food safety is part of the basic contract between American consumers and their government. Any food that doesn't meet our clear and strict standards shouldn't make it into the United States. It's that simple."*

President Bill Clinton  
March 4, 1998

Today, President Clinton calls for legislation ensuring the safety of all imported foods, including fruits and vegetables. This legislation will enhance the Food and Drug Administration's authority to prevent the import of fruits, vegetables, and other food products that do not meet U.S. food safety requirements. The President also announces the release of a report that provides a blueprint on how the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) will work cooperatively with the agricultural community to develop guidance on good agricultural and manufacturing practices for fruits and vegetables.

**Enhancing FDA Oversight For Imported Foods.** President Clinton is calling on Congress to pass food safety legislation that gives the FDA greater authority over imported foods. This legislation will ensure that the FDA halts imports of fruits, vegetables, and other food products from any foreign country with food safety systems that do not provide the same level of protection required for U.S. products. The legislation also permits the FDA to consider refusal of inspection as a factor in halting imports from a country or facility. The President already has committed approximately \$25 million in his Fiscal Year 1999 budget to enable the FDA to dramatically expand its international food inspection force in order to implement this legislation.

**Improving Agricultural And Manufacturing Practices.** The President is announcing the release of a report outlining the progress already made -- and the measures that must still be taken -- to develop guidance for the growing, processing, shipping, and marketing of fruits and vegetables by October 1998. The guidance -- the first-ever specific safety standards for fruits and vegetables -- will address potential food safety problems throughout the production and distribution system and help ensure the sanitation and safety practices of all those seeking to sell produce in the U.S. market.

**Building On A Strong Record Of Accomplishment.** The President's announcement builds on a strong record of food safety initiatives, ensuring that Americans eat the safest possible food. The Administration has put into place improved safety standards for meat, poultry, and seafood products, and has begun the process of developing enhanced standards for fruit and vegetable juices. The Administration also has expanded research, education, and surveillance activities throughout the food safety system. Major accomplishments include:

- Announcement of the FY'99 proposed food safety budget, including an approximate \$101 million increase for food safety initiatives.
- A comprehensive new initiative to improve the safety of nation's food supply -- "Food Safety from Farm to Table" -- detailing a \$43 million food safety program, including measures to improve surveillance, outbreak response, education, and research.

- Safe Drinking Water Act of 1996, requiring drinking water systems to protect against dangerous contaminants like cryptosporidium, and giving people the right to know about contaminants in their water.
- Announcement of new regulations that modernize the nation's meat and poultry inspection system for the first time in 90 years. New standards help prevent E.coli bacteria contamination in meat.

**PRESIDENT CLINTON:  
STRENGTHENING MEDICARE FOR THE 21st CENTURY**

March 5, 1998

*"When Medicare was first passed into law, President Johnson said 'it proved that the vitality of our democracy can shape the oldest of our values to the needs and obligations' of changing times. I am confident that the Medicare Commission will help us to meet the challenges of a new era, by strengthening Medicare for the 21st Century, and giving Americans the security they need to thrive."*

President Bill Clinton  
March 5, 1998

Today, President Clinton meets with the newly appointed Medicare Commission and affirms his commitment to working with Chairman Breaux, Congressman Thomas, and the rest of the Commission to develop a bipartisan consensus for reforming the Medicare program to prepare it for the retirement of the baby boom population.

**Medicare -- One Of This Century's Greatest Achievements.** In the last 30 years, the Medicare program has provided high-quality health care to millions of older Americans and people with disabilities. Medicare is guaranteeing needed medical coverage to millions of Americans, helping Americans live longer, and helping decrease poverty among older Americans.

**Supporting Unprecedented Medicare Reforms.** To strengthen Medicare into the 21st century, last summer President Clinton signed a Balanced Budget Act (BBA) that provided unprecedented reforms to the Medicare program. This bipartisan effort strengthened the life of the Medicare Trust Fund for at least a decade from now, included new health plan choices, and added coverage of preventive benefits. It:

- **Extended the life of the Medicare Trust Fund for at least a decade.** Through a series of payment and structural reforms, the BBA extended the life of the Medicare Trust Fund for at least a decade from today. This achievement built on the President's 1993 budget which extended the Trust Fund for three years.
- **Contained important new preventive benefits.** The BBA included new preventive benefits including annual mammograms for all Medicare beneficiaries over forty; regular pap smears and pelvic exams; diabetes management benefits, and regular colorectal cancer screening.
- **Enacted important new structural reforms.** The BBA also included new market-oriented reforms, such as adding new plan choices including Provider Sponsored Organizations, Preferred Provider Organizations, prospective payment system reforms, and a number of prudent purchasing provisions that allow Medicare to buy services in the same way private health plans do.

**Strengthening Medicare For The Retirement Of Baby Boomers.** While the Balanced Budget Act strengthened Medicare in the short term, the program will face new challenges as the baby boomers retire. The President is committed to working with the Commission to develop consensus for long-term Medicare reforms. The challenges include:

- **An unprecedented number of Americans will enter Medicare as the baby boom generation retires.** The number of elderly will increase by 45 percent in the next 20 years. By 2030, one in

five Americans will be elderly.

- **The ratio of workers to Medicare beneficiaries will drop significantly by 2030.** The number of workers per Medicare beneficiaries will decline from 3.9 to 2.3 during this period, straining the financing of the Medicare program, which is partly financed through a payroll tax.