

The Clinton Presidency: Improving the Nation's Health Care

From the first days of his Administration, President Clinton has worked to expand access to affordable, quality health care for all Americans. The President has strengthened the Medicare program, increased access and improved the quality of our nation's health care system. President Clinton's balanced approach to increasing access to quality health care has paid off for America, with the number of uninsured Americans declining for the first time in 12 years in 1999.

Strengthening and Modernizing Medicare

- ✓ THEN: Eight years ago, the Medicare Trust Fund was expected to run out of money in 1999. Health care fraud was contributing to rising costs and a shaky financial future for the Medicare program. The President and Vice President succeeded in passing measures to strengthen and modernize Medicare, crack down on fraud, and protect the benefits of today's beneficiaries.
- ✓ NOW: President Clinton and Vice President Gore enacted the most comprehensive Medicare reforms in history. They insisted on provisions in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 to protect, modernize and extend the life of the Medicare Trust Fund, while offering new options for patient choice and preventive care. The Balanced Budget Act also provided an array of new weapons in our fight to keep scam artists and fly-by-night health care out of Medicare and Medicaid. President Clinton has assigned more federal prosecutors and FBI agents to fight health care fraud than ever before. The Clinton-Gore Administration's work has extended the life of the Medicare Trust Fund until 2025.

- *Real Person*

Reforming the Insurance Market

- ✓ THEN: In 1992, there were no Federal protections to ensure the portability of health benefits for workers in between jobs or to prevent discrimination based on health status. Every year, an estimated 25 million Americans had breaks in their health care coverage because they changed jobs, or were self employed, or had preexisting conditions that could lead an insurance company to deny coverage. A technological revolution presented new challenges in safeguarding the privacy of Americans' medical records. President Clinton and Vice President Gore took on these new challenges and enacted critical reforms to the insurance market that have helped millions of Americans keep their health insurance.
- ✓ NOW: President Clinton and Vice President Gore enacted the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, which helps people keep health insurance when they change jobs, guarantees renewability of coverage, and ensures access to health insurance for small businesses. The President enacted mental health parity provisions to help eliminate discrimination against Americans with mental illnesses, and instituted new protections for mothers and their newborns and women recovering from mastectomies. President Clinton also issued landmark Federal regulations protecting the privacy of electronic medical records and issued an executive memorandum preventing genetic discrimination in Federal hiring and promotion actions.

Executive Action Guarantees Medical Privacy

"The Administration has made significant headway where Congress could not [on medical privacy] to restore public trust and confidence in our nation's health care system."

-- **Janlori Goldman**, October 29, 1999. Janlori Goldman, considered to be one of the leading medical privacy experts nationwide, directs the Health Privacy Project at Georgetown University's Institute for Health Care Research and Policy. The Project is dedicated to ensuring that people's privacy is safeguarded in the health care environment.

Improving and Expanding Health Insurance Coverage

- ✓ THEN: The number of uninsured – especially uninsured children – was growing. People with disabilities who wanted to work could not for fear of losing their health insurance, and young people leaving foster care could not retain the critical health insurance they needed to make a healthy start as adults. Unlike many other American workers, self-employed Americans received absolutely no tax assistance in purchasing health care insurance. President Clinton came into office determined to expand access to health care for all Americans. His work has led to the first decrease in the number of uninsured Americans in twelve years.
- ✓ NOW: President Clinton and Vice President Gore enacted the largest investment in health care for children since 1965, providing health care for up to five million children with the State Children's Health Insurance Program. They also led aggressive outreach efforts to enroll eligible children. President Clinton enacted landmark legislation providing new health insurance opportunities for working people with disabilities and enacted new legislation to help young people leaving foster care keep their health insurance, as well as legislation to assure that self-employed Americans receive the same tax benefits as workers who have job-based health coverage. And in October 2000, President Clinton enacted the Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment Act, which provides new treatment options to low-income, uninsured women with breast cancer who are diagnosed through federally sponsored screening programs.

Children's Health Insurance Program Provides Security for Families

"When we found the Healthy Families program, it was like a miracle. Now my kids have a regular doctor who knows our family. I don't have to worry about taking them in for their school physicals or for their vaccinations. They can run around and climb on things and jump off things and the only thing I really need to worry about is if they get their clothes dirty. Because of the Healthy Families program, my husband and I can make sure that our kids grow up healthy."

-- **Evelyn Alvarado, California**. Evelyn Alvarado, enrolled her children in California's CHIP program (Healthy Families) in June 1999. Before they enrolled in Healthy Families, Evelyn's children – Daniel (aged 13), Mary (aged 11), and Samuel (aged 8) –were uninsured for eight years and only saw the doctor in the case of emergencies.

If we don't have a separate disability section, we should insert the Jeffords-Kennedy quote here too. __

Ensuring that All Americans Have Access to Cancer Prevention and Treatment

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-- Fran Visco, President, National Breast Cancer Coalition, October 7, 2000

Improving Public Health

- ✓ THEN: In 1992, America's public health delivery system was badly in need of repair: half of two year olds did not receive their immunizations, infant mortality rates were too high, and funding for biomedical research was inadequate. President Clinton and Vice President Gore have improved our public health system and made investments that have given us a healthier America.
- ✓ NOW: President Clinton and Vice President Gore raised childhood immunization rates to record levels by investing in the Childhood Immunization Initiative in 1993. More than 90 percent of America's toddlers received the most critical doses of each of the routinely recommended vaccines in 1996, 1997, and again in 1998. The infant mortality is at an all-time low, and has declined by 15.2 percent since 1992. The Clinton-Gore Administration improved the safety of food for all Americans by seeking substantial funding for such initiatives as a nationwide early-warning system for foodborne illness, increased inspections, and the expansion of food-safety research, risk assessment and education. The Administration has also put into place improved science-based standards for meat, poultry, and seafood products. President Clinton and Vice President Gore have increased funding for the National Institutes of Health by \$7.3 billion (58 percent), and they have strongly supported the efforts of the National Human Genome Research Institute to map the entire human genome, which will revolutionize health care in the future.

Increases in NIH Funding Have Led To Advances in Biomedical Research

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~~**--Christopher Reeves, Superman**~~ **Barbara Woolley is looking for a new quote to insert.**

THEN: [not sure what to put here – I don't have a lot on this]

NOW: President Clinton enacted legislation simplifying state options to expand eligibility and design community based long term care programs, allowing seniors and people with disabilities to receive care in their homes rather than in institutional settings. The President also **enacted legislation allowing the Federal government to serve as a model employer by offering quality private long-term care insurance to Federal employees.** Finally, the Clinton Administration has made ensuring the health and safety of nursing home residents a top priority and has issued the toughest nursing home regulations in the history of the Medicare and Medicaid programs, requiring states to crack down on nursing homes that repeatedly violate health and safety requirements and changing the inspection process to increase the focus on preventing bedsores, malnutrition and resident abuse.

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NOW: In the absence of Congressional action on a Patients' Bill of Rights, President Clinton directed HHS, OPM, DOL, DOD, and DVA to ensure that their employees and beneficiaries had the important new benefits and rights that are guaranteed to health care consumers in the Administration's proposed Patients Bill of Rights, including choice of providers and plans, access to emergency services, participation in treatment decisions, confidentiality of health information and a fair complaint and appeals process. Medicare, Medicaid, S-CHIP, the Indian Health Service, FEHBP plans, the Veterans Administration facilities, and the Military Health System are responding by ensuring that all protections that can be extended under current law be provided.

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- ✓ **Infant Mortality at All-Time Low:** Infant mortality has declined by 15.2 percent since 1992.
- ✓ **Cancer Deaths Have Stopped Rising:** For the first time, cancer death rates have stopped rising, despite a growing and aging population.
- ✓ **New AIDS Infections Declined:** For the first time in the history of the AIDS epidemic, new AIDS infections declined, and the latest data available indicates a decrease in HIV/AIDS mortality of 42 percent.
- ✓ **Improved Food Safety:** From 1997 to 1999, illness from the most common foodborne pathogens declined by 20 percent -- which means nearly a million fewer Americans are suffering from foodborne illnesses each year. In addition, infections from *E. coli* O157:H7 are down 22 percent due to improved sanitation in slaughter and processing plants; and infections from *Salmonella enteritidis* are down 50 percent due, in part, to Administration efforts to decrease contamination in eggs.
- ✓ **Lowest Teen Birth Rate on Record:** The teen birth rate is the lowest ever recorded, falling eight years in a row and dropping by 20 percent from 1991 to 1999. The teen pregnancy rate is also at a record low.
- ✓ **Extended Protections to People in HMOs:** Protections included in the Patients' Bill of Rights have been extended to 85 million people covered by Federal health plans, and Medicare and Medicaid.
- ✓ **Extended Insurance Coverage of Contraceptives:** Insurance coverage of contraceptives has been extended to approximately 1.2 million women of childbearing age covered by federal health plans.
- ✓ **Record High Levels of Biomedical Research:** NIH supports the highest levels of research ever on nearly all types of disease and health conditions, making new breakthroughs possible in vaccine development and use, the treatment of chronic disease, and prevention and treatment of diseases such as diabetes, osteoporosis, heart disease, cancer, and neurological diseases like Alzheimers and Parkinsons.

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[NOTE: KK/AR – if we don't put tobacco in families document, it could be worked into this one – see families doc for the proposed paragraph we offered last time.]

President Clinton's Legacy: Improving Health Care

Health care was a growing problem in American in 1992. Working American families struggled to keep up with soaring health care costs -- often worrying that they would lose their coverage all together -- while too many Americans had no coverage at all. At the same time, Medicare seemed to hover on the brink of crisis, with experts were predicting that the Medicare Trust Fund would go bankrupt by 1999. After the economy, health led all other domestic issues in public opinion polls by a ratio of more than 2-1, while 30 percent of Americans said that health care costs were the most urgent health problem facing the nation.

Increasing Access and Improving the Nation's Health

President Clinton came into office determined to expand access to health care for all Americans. The President has strengthened the Medicare program, and taken strong steps to increase access and improve the quality of our nation's health care system.

- Enacted the most comprehensive Medicare reforms in history, passing the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 which included provisions to protect, modernize and extend the life of the Medicare Trust Fund while offering new options for patient choice and preventive care. The Balanced Budget Act also provided an array of new weapons in our fight to keep scam artists and fly-by-night health care out of Medicare and Medicaid, and President Clinton has assigned more federal prosecutors and FBI agents to fight health care fraud than ever before.
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- Improved health care for our most vulnerable citizens, raising childhood immunization rates to record levels by investing in the Childhood Immunization Initiative. The President also implemented a comprehensive nursing home quality initiative, issuing the toughest nursing home regulations in the history of the Medicare and Medicaid programs to ensure seniors receive high quality care.
- Extended strong, enforceable patient protections for millions of Americans by directing federal agencies to ensure that Americans covered by federal health plans, and Medicare and Medicaid, have the benefits and rights guaranteed under the proposed Patients' Bill of Rights.
- Improved women's reproductive health care by signing the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, enacting provisions to provide contraceptive coverage to federal employees, and securing historic increases in family planning programs. During his first days in office, the President issued five executive orders protecting women's reproductive rights, including repealing the Mexico City policy; reversing the federal gag rule; and lifting the ban on the importation of RU-486, leading the way for FDA approval based on scientific evidence.
- Made unprecedented investments in biomedical research, increasing funding for the National Institutes of Health by nearly \$8 billion and strongly supporting the efforts of the National Human Genome Research Institute to map the entire human genome, which will revolutionize health care in the future. The President also enacted comprehensive FDA reform that expedited the review and approval of new drug products to ensure that the benefits of medical breakthroughs reach the people who need them more quickly.

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- **Restored fairness to immigrants:** The President fought for and succeeded in restoring disability, health and nutritional benefits for certain legal immigrants and he has taken steps to ensure that immigrant families have meaningful access to the benefits for which they are eligible.

The Results: More Americans Have Health Care

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From the first days of his Administration, President Clinton has worked to expand access to affordable, quality health care for all Americans. Health care costs were rising at a rapid rate while the number of uninsured — especially uninsured children — was growing. When the President took office in 1993, workers feared that taking leave from work to care for an ill family member could cost them their jobs. There were no Federal protections to ensure the portability of health benefits for workers in between jobs or prevent discrimination based on health status. Individuals with disabilities were not able to return to the workforce without losing their Medicare or Medicaid coverage. In addition, the public health delivery system was badly in need of repair: half of two year olds did not receive their immunizations; teenage pregnancy rates were high; and the number of new HIV / AIDS infections and deaths were spiraling.

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