

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 25, 1997

PRESIDENT AND THE FIRST LADY ANNOUNCE NEW INITIATIVES
TO IMPROVE PREVENTION AND EARLY DETECTION OF BREAST CANCER

Today the President and the First Lady announced new steps to ensure that more women get regular, high quality mammograms. Early detection, followed by prompt treatment, can reduce the risk of death by as much as 30 percent. However, a mammogram can fail to do its job because of poor medical techniques, processing or reading of the films; inadequate record keeping and reporting of results, and lack of effective quality assurance controls. In 1995, about 35 percent of mammography facilities that sought accreditation initially failed the quality requirements. Moreover, far too few women get regular mammograms. Thirty-three percent of women ages 50 to 64, and 45 percent of women over age 65 reported not receiving a mammogram in the last two years. The initiatives the President and the First Lady are announcing today include:

Improving Quality Standards of the Mammography Facilities Nationwide. The new FDA regulations announced today, authorized by the Mammography Quality Standards Act (MSQA), set new high standards for mammography facilities. They include important new clarifications that require facilities to hire capable technologists, to use equipment that produces clear and accurate images, and to ensure that physicians have the skills to interpret the rules. It also requires facilities to display their FDA certification, so women and their families know they have met the quality standards. They also require that patients be fully informed of results of a mammogram so that follow up testing and treatment can begin immediately. These new standards will ensure that women receive high quality, accurate mammograms. The National Breast Cancer Coalition applauded the implementation of the final regulations stating that this Rule will ensure that every woman in America will receive the highest quality mammography.

Initiating a New Mammography Education Campaign at the National Cancer Institute (NCI). Today, the NCI is initiating a new national education campaign that provides women, their families and health professionals clear, up-to-date information about steps they should take to detect mammography and breast cancer. The materials being released have been developed to educate women about the recommendations made by NCI this spring that women in their 40s and older should get regular screening mammograms. The NCI materials will be released to community organizations, doctor's offices, and other health care facilities around the country, providing education about the risk factors for breast cancer, the benefits and limitations of mammography, and the importance of regular mammograms for women in their 40s and older. They also highlight breast cancer incidence and mortality rates for women in different racial/ethnic groups.

Launching the First Lady's National Annual Medicare Mammography Campaign. Each year the First Lady has launched a mammography campaign to encourage older women to get mammograms. Despite the fact that mammography can significantly reduce mortality rates, 45 percent of women over age 65 have not had a mammogram in the last two years. To encourage more older women to get regular mammograms, this year, the First Lady's campaign includes:

New Nationwide Public Service Announcements to Encourage More Older

Women to Get Mammograms. Today, the First Lady is announcing two new public service announcements to encourage older women to get mammograms. One of the PSAs features Candice Bergen and was aired this week at the close of the Murphy Brown Show. The second PSA includes breast cancer survivor and spokesperson Carol Baldwin and her sons, Alec, William, Daniel and Stephen. In addition to these PSAs, a number of corporations have made important new commitments to educate women about the importance of regular mammography and screening.

HORIZON Grants to Improve Mammography Rates Among Minority Women. This year, HCFA has focused the Medicare mammography campaign to reach minority Medicare beneficiaries who are even less likely to get mammography screenings. HCFA launched Horizon Project grants, a three-year initiative in six major cities which focuses efforts on increasing mammography rates among Hispanic and African-American Medicare beneficiaries. These comprehensive efforts will not only encourage more women in these areas to get regular mammograms, but provide insight on how to overcome barriers that prevent women from getting mammograms. The project's first report, received this week, teaches a great deal about how to identify barriers including lack of awareness about the Medicare mammography benefit, language barriers, and misconceptions that only women of childbearing age are at risk for breast cancer, and strategies to overcome them.

The Initiatives Being Announced Today Build on the President's Strong Record in the Fight Against Breast Cancer.

The Balanced Budget Act Made Medicare Mammograms More Affordable and Accessible. The balanced budget the President signed into law this summer took steps to encourage more women to get regular mammograms by waiving deductibles for all mammograms and covering mammograms on an annual basis. Although Medicare has covered screening mammography since 1991, only 14 percent of eligible beneficiaries without supplemental insurance receive mammograms, indicating that cost can be a significant barrier. The balanced budget also expanded coverage to pay for annual screening mammograms for all Medicare beneficiaries age 40 and over -- making coverage consistent with the new recommendations of national experts. Earlier in the year, President Clinton took action to bring Medicaid and Federal Employees Health Benefits in line with the new recommendations.

The President Has a Long Record in Fighting Breast Cancer. The President has taken a number of important steps to fight breast cancer. Since the President took office, funding for breast cancer research, prevention and treatment has nearly doubled to over \$500 million in 1997; the CDC breast and cervical program which provides screening for low-income women has expanded nationwide; new space technology has been utilized to gain knowledge that is valuable in the detection and treatment of breast and ovarian cancer; and funding has increased for an unprecedented partnership at the Department of Defense between the military, scientists, physicians and community members for breast cancer research grants.

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October 26, 1995

**REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
AT THE NATIONAL BREAST CANCER COALITION SECOND ANNUAL GALA
NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you all. Thank you so much, Fran. You're right, I was a little put out when you picked my birthday. I grumbled, I complained, but I decided that it was much more important for me to be here with all of you, particularly those of you who are survivors. Because, birthdays are only as important as the quality of life and the opportunities we have to be with people we love and we care about and I'll be home tonight and they'll be there, so I am very honored on behalf of the President and myself to celebrate survival, to celebrate courage, to celebrate perseverance, to celebrate all those virtues and traits that bring so many of you here in this room tonight.

I'm particularly pleased to be with Patricia Duff and Ron Pearlman and salute them for their individual and corporate devotion to this cause and so many others that they have championed. I'm pleased to be with Monty and Suzie Herwitz and to have met their family tonight. I also am always delighted to see Paula Zahn who always does a wonderful job and tonight shared that personal story with us. And I was so pleased to see the three honorees accepting their awards this evening. All of them stand for the hundreds of thousands of women and families who are being honored through them because of their activism and commitment on behalf of the coalition and the cause of eradicating breast cancer.

I don't know that I could ever say quite enough about Fran Visco. She is a fearless advocate. She is someone who believes with every cell of her being that things can be better if enough people banded together to work on behalf of the common good. I happen to believe that also, and felt from the very moment I met her in Williamsburg those three years ago, now, that she was someone with whom I had a great deal in common and I am honored to be anywhere she is.

I also want to acknowledge and thank someone who is here, Dr. Susan Love, who will be speaking to you later. I know that everyone in this room appreciates her pioneering work in breast cancer treatment and prevention. But I hope you also know that she has changed the way medicine treats breast cancer. She has

taught a whole generation of medical students how to take better care of breast cancer patients. And so we owe her so much, not only for the obvious work she does with individual patients, for the extraordinary effort she has made to educate all women about issues effecting our health, but the way she has changed the medical professions attitude about this illness.

The kind of coalition that has been put together that we are honoring here has only been in existence for five years, but it has accomplished so much in a short period of time. It has literally changed and saved lives which is something not many of us can say. It has walked into the midst of grief and tragedy where children have been robbed of their mothers and we as adults have lost our own, where husbands have lost wives, where mothers and fathers have lost daughters. And walking into the midst of that, the coalition in its many forms of all the women and men who support its work, have said you too can be part of this fight. Turn your loss into an energy designed to eradicate breast cancer. Help us change the way we think about this disease. Help us find a cure. Help us prevent it. Hope has often replaced the grief and the tragedy.

I know that when my own mother-in-law went through her four years of struggle with breast cancer. What I admired most about that remarkable woman's courageous efforts, is how she found energy to keep working on behalf of breast cancer prevention and treatment, to travel when she could barely walk to make speeches, to lend her name to fund raising efforts, because she wanted so much to continue every single day to be part of the eventual solution.

We all know the frightening statistics and we all have our personal stories. We know that breast cancer is no respecter of race or ethnicity, it strips all of us down to our basic human essentials. It reminds us that, beneath the differences that we too often use to divide ourselves, one from the other, we really are all the same. We have the same hopes and dreams and aspirations, the same fears and challenges. Breast cancer has been a disease that, for too many years, was not talked about -- left on the back burner of medical research -- and not considered a disease that was as important as some others.

Thankfully, that has changed and we are making progress, but the progress must be continued. In the four short years that the national breast cancer coalition has worked to make government funding for breast cancer research a priority, we have seen an increase in the money allocated from ninety million to six hundred million dollars today. That funding addresses breast cancer on all from; from research into its causes, its genetic roots, its possible environmental connections, to the improvement of mammography, to the development of innovative treatment and prevention strategies.

But you know because you are here, that as with so many other aspects of our life together, government can not fight this disease alone. Private support and funding are critical to keeping both advanced breast cancer research and public outreach efforts on track. Every dollar donated to breast cancer research prevention and treatment brings us years closer to the final eradication of this disease.

By your grass-roots activism, your outspokenness, your persistent lobbying, you have raised awareness about this disease and you have frightened a lot of officials into doing exactly what they should have done anyway. I hope that you appreciate the importance that this coalition has played, because even if you have a very supportive President, as you do, someone who is committed both because of his head and his heart, it is still difficult unless there is a network of activists who are constantly keeping watch to know exactly what is going on, even in the government.

As Fran mentioned, there was a moment a few months ago when it appeared that because of budget cuts and the like, that the money that had been fought so hard for in the Defense Department would be lost because it was not considered essential to our national security. The President was able to step in and put a stop to that because he had made it a priority. But it's that kind of constant vigilance that is required.

We are moving forward on the National Action Plan on Breast Cancer and it's very important that this plan stay on track as well. It has been formulated by consumers, clinicians, scientists, government officials, and other experts. It is a part now of the government, it is being implemented through the public health services office on women's health, whose director, Dr. Susan Blumenthal is here with us tonight and whom I would like to thank for her constant and vigilant watch over what happens with this plan. But each of us who care about what happens to our friends, our family members, ourselves must remain vigilant.

If I have any message this evening, in addition to congratulating all of you and thanking you for your efforts, it would be to please ask you to give as much attention and energy as you can in the coming weeks and months. To being sure that the gains that have been made on behalf of breast cancer and medical research, prevention, and treatment will continue.

I am worried about the cutbacks in medicare and what that will mean in the decrease in the accessibility of older women to mammograms and to clinical visits. I am worried about the cutbacks in Medicaid and what that will mean to poor women who will not have access. I have met too many women, who, as Fran said, are cut out of our existing health care system. I've had

women tell me that at their annual check-up, which they paid for out of their own pocket because they had no insurance, their doctor found a lump, referred them to a surgeon, where they were told that because they didn't have insurance, it should just be watched for a while.

I've been at breast cancer awareness meetings like the one I attended in San Diego, where I was trying to encourage older women on Medicare to take advantage of the medicare benefits to have mammograms, when a woman stood up in the back of the room and said: I'm only sixty, I don't qualify for medicare, I still work, I have no insurance, I have a lump, what can I do? So I worry about whether we will be taking one step forward with respect to the prevention and research and two steps back with respect to affordability and access for women.

We all have to be vigilant, because as we continue this fight against breast cancer, we know that there will be many competing considerations. There will be other diseases, there will be other needs that people have, and as we watch the budget battles that are going to be engaging the Capitol and Washington, and the capitols around the country, we have to be sure that women's health and diseases like breast cancer are not once again relegated to the back of the concerns where, for too long, they were.

I also want to say that I am particularly worried about the impact on women in minority communities who are already less likely to seek treatment, less likely to be able to afford it, and I was pleased to see the honorees this evening who, in their own way are working to reach out to women across the board in every community. But we have to speak out, about what budget cuts and budget priorities mean in real people's lives. Behind the statistics and all the numbers, are women, women who need treatment, women who need care, women who need the kind of work that you are doing so that the disease can be prevented.

This is not a faceless disease, nor is it just a woman's disease, it is a family disease, and it's a national epidemic. The President and I will continue to do everything we can to assist the coalition in its endeavors. And I look forward to the day, very honestly, when the coalition will be disbanded because we will have a huge gathering in a much larger room where we will have Billy Joel be the warm-up act for an announcement that breast cancer, like polio, is through.

That's what we are working for. Thank you for what you are doing to make that day possible.

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Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute's 22nd Annual Gala
Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
Washington, D.C.
September 15, 1999

Thank you so much. I am delighted to be here at this gala—the last gala of this century for this institute. And from what I can see and what I've heard, it is certainly a successful occasion. I want to thank all of you for supporting the important work of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute. But I particularly want to thank your chair. Lucille has done a fabulous job in helping to bring attention to the issues that affect children, and youth, and women, and people throughout our country—and particularly in the Latino community. She is passionate about the work of the Institute and all that it does to open doors for all Americans.

But whenever she talks so eloquently, as we just heard her again this evening, she always leaves out one important point—that none of the work of any of you would have been possible without her extraordinary leadership. And I would like to applaud Lucille again for her work in the Caucus. (Applause.)

I am also delighted to be here with so many of you who lead the Congress to remind us of what is important—to keep our focus on the issues that will matter in the future. In addition, the community activists, the media leaders, the artists, the business owners, the policy makers, and citizens who are here this evening are shaping that future day by day.

We have come a very long way in the last several decades. I certainly remember very well how different conditions were in 1972, when as a young law student I went down to the Rio Grande Valley to register voters. And I went to the places that Alan and Paolo (ph.) and (inaudible), where there were so many who were living in such deprivation and disadvantage. Just a few weeks ago I went back to Texas, where I could see the progress, I could see the work that had been done to build strong businesses and strong families that would create a better future. And that is why I have seen in community after community, from New York to California, I have met Hispanic leaders and citizens who have been and now are obtaining what they have demanded—a seat at the table and opportunities to create their own destiny. You have, from this conference and the work of the Institute, brought attention to the work that still remains to be done.

We have a lot to be proud of as we meet here for the end of this century and millennium. We've made a lot of progress. And in a few minutes you will hear from someone who has, along with my husband, led the way for our nation into that century—when the Vice President comes to the rescue.

But as much progress as we have made, we know there is still work that must be done. I'm very proud that we have seen economic boom, and we have seen evidence of it

in so many people who have been traditionally left out. But I am not satisfied, because we are still leaving too many men, women and children behind. I'm very pleased that we are seeing progress in education, but we still do not have a world-class education for every single boy and girl. (Applause.)

And I'm very proud that we have in our nation the finest health care in the world, but I am not proud that we leave too many Americans out because they cannot access or afford that health care. So what we need this evening is to ask ourselves what will we do to ensure that the voices of all Americans, particularly the Spanish-Americans, are heard? Because if those voices are heard, then progress will continue and we will move closer to a day when the quality healthcare that children receive no longer depends upon where their parents were born or how much money they have. We will move closer to a day when Spanish children can turn on the TV or go to a movie and see themselves included in the picture of America. (Applause.)

In a few short years, there will be 15 million Hispanic young people living in our country. These are not somebody else's children—these are our children. They are our children in every way one could imagine, because what happens to them will directly impact on the quality of our life together. What will we do to ensure that they have the opportunities that they need, particularly educational opportunities?

For more than 30 years, my work on behalf of children has taken me into all kinds of neighborhoods and barrios, schools and community centers, where I have seen the heroic efforts that so many families and teachers and others are making on behalf of all of our children. But I know too well that we are not treating all of our children fairly. Too many are in overcrowded classrooms; they are not given the tools for education or access to the Internet that we take for granted for our children. They are not given the kinds of resources that every child should have.

At the recent convening that I held at the White House that was sponsored by the Caucus, we showcased some of the solutions that can make a difference in the lives of all of our children. I want to thank the Caucus for making that conference possible and for helping to create an agenda with the important issues that face us. And by recognizing successful programs from all over the country, that if we follow their lead, we know we can make a difference in the lives of our children. Every child deserves a world-class education. (Applause.)

When I go to schools, as I know many of you do, and I went to the first day of school recently in Queens, New York, and I looked into the eyes of those children, those beautiful children, so many of them coming from families where English is not their first language—they're intimidated and worried and nervous, but are filled with the brightness and energy and youth that only a child could have. And I often tell them when I meet with them that I want them to be able to move into the 21st century much better equipped than I am. And they can be because they will have at their disposal two languages. And I look at these young children and I tell them how proud I am of them because when they

learn how to read and write and communicate in both English and Spanish, they will be a lot smarter than I am. (Applause.)

That is why we have to continue to press forward on the agenda that the President and the Congress share, to enable us to put more teachers into our classrooms, and to help build more classrooms and more schools, and to connect all of our schools to the Internet so that no child is left behind. (Applause)

It is why we must continue to work for preschool programs and after-school programs and summer school programs—so every child can absolutely learn to the fullest of his or her potential and so each child can be safe. And that is the point all of us must stress and work for—that the guns and violence that stalk too many of our children should be kept at bay by all of the adults joining hands and making it as difficult as possible for anyone to get hold of a gun. It should not be possible for anyone to bring a gun into our schools. (Applause.)

The Caucus' agenda is the agenda of the future for our children. And I think each of us should ask ourselves—as we look toward the end of this year and the end of the century and even the millennium, with all of our blessings in America, this time of extraordinary prosperity—“What is our obligation to our children?” How on earth will we face our children in 10 or 15 years if we do not do all we can now to equip them to make the most of their own lives? How would we ever explain that we squandered this rare opportunity to take care of our problems, like making sure Social Security and Medicare are well preserved and reformed and modernized; making sure we have the best education, schools and teachers? How will we explain that to them? Well, the Hispanic Caucus will not have to explain it, because they are on the right side of history, and on the right side of our children by knowing the investments we make today will pay off tenfold. (Applause.)

So let me just suggest that, as you finish this day up and as you come out of this conference which has addressed so many important issues, that you reach out to as many Americans as possible with your vision of the future, and you explain why this is not the time to pass an irresponsible tax plan and stick our children with the bills; this is not the time to give tax cuts that will undercut Head Start and Education and smaller classes and better schools. (Applause.)

They'd say that you, along with all the rest of us, let this epiphany come true. No matter where they live, let them know they are valued and valuable. Lucille told you how I was very concerned when I read the latest statistics about the numbers of young Hispanic students who drop out of school. That is a ticket to a future that is less than it should be for the vast majority of those youngsters. It is a problem of national significance that can only be addressed in a partnership among families and educators, policymakers, members of Congress, and all of us who care about what kinds of options and possibilities those children will have.

What does it say about what is going on in Washington? It really is a question of values. What do we value as a nation? Who do we want to be? What are we willing to give and sacrifice for our children? Will we move forward together or will we splinter and divide and fall backwards?

Imagine that we are at the 50th anniversary gala of the Institute—many of us will be back in some way, whether it's physical or virtual. (Laughter.) Some of the young people who are here will be back as members of Congress and leaders of business and other endeavors of society. And we will have to be willing to be judged by those who will follow. I think that the values and priorities of the Caucus means they will be judged as having been brave enough to put themselves on the line and raise their voices to the kind of future we all have a stake in. But we cannot do that unless we take advantage of this unique moment in history, a moment in which we demand the most of ourselves for those families among us that have the least; that we make clear that Hispanic children are all of our children and part of our future; that we raise our voices individually and together to ensure that no child in America is ever left behind.

Because if we do that, then I won't be afraid to answer the questions the children follow when asked where they're from. I will be able to say that I and so many others did stand with them, and did all that we knew we could to put them first, and we worked as hard as we knew how not to let them down. And that will be because we elected leaders like all of you, and I hope like a president named Al Gore, who understands that we must work together and be willing to stand together and make it absolutely clear that our common humanity and our common citizenship as Americans demands that we put all of our children first.

Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
Breast Cancer Event
East Room
October 21, 1998

Thank you all. Welcome to the White House. Please be seated. It is a pleasure to have all of you join the President and me in being here to mark Breast Cancer Awareness Month. We have in this room, many of the powerful voices in the fight against breast cancer. And today we will celebrate how far we have come in that fight and renew our pledge to the task before us. But right now, I want to introduce someone whose decision to fight for all of the causes and many of the accomplishments that we are going to celebrate today. As you might have noticed, he has had an even busier than usual schedule and I am so pleased that he could take time out to be here with us for this important day as well.

He wants to highlight some of the important victories we have just gained in the budget, some of which will have a direct impact on the work that all of you do day in and day out to improve the health of American women. So it is a great pleasure to introduce someone who cares deeply about this issue, has fought hard for many of the advances of health that we celebrate today and is a champion in the fight against breast cancer. My husband, President Bill Clinton.

The President speaks...

Well, I am delighted that the President could join us and give us the good news that he did today. And I know how so many of us in this room realize that we have made enormous progress and yet at the same time we have a long way to go. Today we have with us leading breast cancer advocates, researchers and scientists, corporate sponsors of the Medicare-Mammography Initiative, women's health advocates and many who are supporting our federal agencies. I would particularly like to ask the representatives from the Department of Defense to stand because we often don't give them the spotlight they deserve for the work that they are doing.

And I know that we have with us many cancer survivors who I want to thank for being here and being part of this struggle. I too, want to congratulate our new FDA commissioner. She is going to bring some special expertise to her job that will be very important to all of us.

We have with us on this platform three remarkable women -- Secretary Shalala whose unflagging leadership has done so much to improve the health and well being of America's children and families. And Donna, I want to thank you.

Doctor Nancy Davidson, the Director of breast cancer research at the Johns Hopkins Oncology Center, who represents the many dedicated scientists, researchers and medical doctors across the country who are making extraordinary strides in our fight against breast cancer. Thank you for joining us Dr. Davidson.

We will also hear from my friend, Fran Visco, whose private courage and public advocacy on behalf of women with breast cancer is renowned far beyond the walls of this room. In addition to her leadership of the National Breast Cancer Coalition, she is the co-chair of the National Action Plan on Breast Cancer and serves on the President's Cancer Panel. I am pleased that she has just been named to the integration panel of DOD's breast cancer research program. Fran, thank you for all that you have done and all that you are doing.

I will never forget the day in 1993 when Fran and so many other passionate breast cancer advocates came to the White House to this very room, armed with signatures from 2.6 million Americans demanding national action on breast cancer. This did not come as a surprise because Fran and I had been talking since we met in 1992 -- and I had been urging her to go ahead and push as hard as she could, that we needed to make breast cancer a national priority. Well, she didn't need very much encouragement. So she and so many others came with the message that we had to create a public-private partnership and we did, the National Action Plan on Breast Cancer.

Today I am pleased to release a report highlighting the accomplishments of this plan and the Administration and the progress we have made together in the fight against breast cancer. First, the Administration took the lead in dramatically boosting investments in cancer research. These new funds have helped lead to historic breakthroughs that the President referred to. And we are so fortunate that we have had good support from around the country and in the Congress to make it possible that we could put the money where it needs to be in doing the research that is promising and we hope will not only prevent the disease eventually and give hope and the root to that to so many people who are suffering.

Second, the Administration expanded the availability in quality of prevention tools like mammograms. Too many women, I found when I traveled around this country, just couldn't afford mammograms. This year, thanks to the Administration, Medicare began to cover annual mammograms for all beneficiaries and is making them more affordable.

We have also spearheaded a series of unprecedented outreach initiatives to make sure older women know about this benefit. Third, we have worked hard to improve access to treatment and quality of care for women with breast cancer. The President has proposed, as he has said, that Medicare cover clinical trial costs. We want to get that done and we want to make it easier for physicians to enroll patients in clinical trials.

The Administration also has proposed an initiative to address, the racial health inequities in six major areas in our country, including cancer. And Congress has taken the first step in funding that proposal. Finally, building on the valuable efforts begun at the DOD and the FDA, the National Cancer Institute is fully integrating patients and advocates into setting the nation's research agenda.

We have seen a decline, which we all have celebrated, of 4.5 % in breast cancer mortality rates

between 1991 and 1995. Yet all of us know that breast cancer remains the second leading cause of cancer deaths among American women. One in eight women will develop breast cancer, up from one in twenty just two decades ago. This year alone approximately 180,000 new cases will be diagnosed and the disease will claim nearly half a million lives in this decade.

So clearly, we have to rededicate ourselves to the task of preventing, treating and eventually curing breast cancer. To that end, I am pleased to announce a number of important new steps the Administration is taking to build on and expand our record of progress, in addition to the historic investment in cancer research that the President just announced.

I also would like to add my thanks to the Vice President who played a pivotal role in expanding these new cancer research funds. I also want to underscore that \$40 million of those funds will be devoted to breast cancer alone.

I am also pleased to announce a major new clinical trial of drugs that have the potential to reduce the risk of developing breast cancer. The trial will involve 20,000 women at hundreds of sites across this country and Canada. It will build on the success of previous breast cancer trials by examining two drugs which have shown promise in reducing the risk of getting breast cancer.

I also want to highlight an ongoing trial at NIH that is examining the relationship between diet and disease, showing us what we can do in our daily lives to decrease the chance of getting cancer in the first place.

We are also launching an expanded outreach and education campaign to ensure that America's older women get the recommended mammograms. It will build on government and private efforts which I first announced in 1995. It is very important that we do all that we can to make it possible and I want to thank the people who have been a part of that mammography initiative. They have really made a big difference.

I also want to thank all of you who are part of our ongoing efforts. There are people in this audience who I do not want to embarrass or put into the spotlight, who are breast cancer survivors and have very brave stories to tell including some of the people who work and volunteer at the White House. There are people who have really struggled with the cost of their treatment -- struggled with the costs even of mammography.

And I am very sorry that the Congress did not pass legislation sponsored by Senator Jeffords and Senator Kennedy, for whom I am very grateful. It would allow people with disabilities and illnesses like breast cancer to buy into Medicaid to receive health care coverage. I hope Senator, that you will renew that in the new Congress. We have this program that is available and there are many people who cannot afford private insurance that could benefit from it.

Many of you have done so much to bring women in through outreach efforts and education and I am grateful to all of you. Our national commitment is paying off and now is the time to push

even harder. We have to pass the Patient's Bill of Rights, as the President said.

Some of the saddest stories I have heard are from people who have had chemotherapy interrupted because employers have changed plans and they could no longer continue with the doctor that they trusted. We have to fight for laws which will end and prevent discrimination based on genetic information and we have to end racial disparities that place minority women at far greater risks of dying from breast cancer. We have to continue to integrate advocates like Fran into planning the nation's cancer research agenda.

Building on these steps, I am as hopeful as the President is that we will have some great stories to tell in the years to come about breakthroughs that we can celebrate. Now I would like to introduce someone who has been at the forefront of making all of this happen and is helping us bring the day of cure and certainly prevention much closer. And that is someone you all know, and that I like to think of as the leading advocate in our country, Fran Visco.

Fran Visco speaks and introduces Nancy Davidson...

Nancy Davidson speaks and introduces Donna Shalala...

Donna Shalala speaks and the First Lady returns to the podium...

Thank you. Thank you all. Thank you for being here with you today. I hope that you will take with you the report from the Federal Coordinating Committee on Breast cancer and get the report card from the National Breast Cancer Coalition. Keep giving us your good advice, constructive criticism and help so that we can always keep pushing the limits of what is possible to do and exceed them at every turn. This is something that brings us together in both celebration and remembrance. I hope by this time next year when we celebrate in October we will have more good news to report. And that is because of so many of you who are here in this room and so many others who are beyond its walls. But this is a good news story for America and women around the world. On behalf of the President I want to thank all of you for making it so.

Thank you very much.

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
Remarks for the Congressional Black Caucus
September 18, 1998

Thank you so much. I am delighted to be here. I regretted deeply that my obligation to go to Mother Theresa's funeral on behalf of my husband and my country prevented me from being here last year, and I am so pleased that you have invited me back so I would have a chance to address this important gathering about some very important issues.

I want to start by thanking Congressman Paine not only for his introduction, but for his steady and very important leadership over many years on behalf of so many important issues. I feel privileged that I have gotten to know him -- that I have had a chance to travel with him, that I have seen him in action -- and I just have the highest regard and admiration for his leadership and his personal commitment to doing all that he can helping children at home and abroad, particularly in Africa, have the kind of opportunities to lead lives to fulfill their own God-given potential. Thank you so much.

I am delighted to be here with Congressman Hilliard, Congresswoman Brown and Congresswoman Kilpatrick, and my dear friend of many many years, Secretary Slater. It is also very good to see ambassadors from so many of the African countries represented here, as well as representatives from the non-governmental community -- foundation and business leaders, and friend and supporters of the Congressional Black Caucus and of Africa.

I think it is so important that this meeting be held and that this particular subject be given the attention it is today. I know that you are going to be having some very important panels and other speakers discuss all that we can do to raise the visibility of issues affecting Africa and the African people. To connect those issues and those people with us here in America is certainly for the good because we are living in an interdependent, interconnected world. One of the principle reasons that I went first to Africa, and later my husband and I went to Africa, was to bring home to America the importance of that vast continent -- the opportunities that are there to work together with the people of that continent to promote freedom and democracy and peace and stability. And to give Americans a broader view, a more realistic view, of what goes on in Africa.

The Congressman referred to my visit -- I wish it had been 28 days. I had so much I wanted to see and of course couldn't see all the things I was invited to see, but when I arrived in Uganda, I had so many people saying to me all through my trip prior to that point, "When is the President coming? When will your husband be in Africa?" And of course you know what bureaucracy is like, what the White House and the State Department are like, and nobody wants to jump the gun or make a decision that hasn't been well thought out, but I certainly had concluded that the President needed to come to Africa. So, I called my husband.

The night before I made my speech at the now River Center, I said, "Now Bill, I really wish tomorrow I could announce that you are coming to Africa." And he said, "Well, why can't

you?" And I said, "Well, I don't exactly have clearance to announce that." And he said, "Oh, yes you do, just say I am coming to Africa."

So, because of the President's commitment and his concern, we were able to make that announcement and follow up with an extraordinary trip. I think all of you who accompanied us, and those of you who followed it from afar could see how significant a trip that was. It certainly changed and transformed my husband's view, and many of the people who were traveling with us would not have been involved in African affairs before, and I think that has really set our relationship with Africa on a different footing.

I want to start by thanking the Congressional Black Caucus and all of you here today. First for focusing on what is important, what will stand the test of time, what makes a difference to the boys and girls growing up here, in our inner cities, in our rural countryside, and the boys and girls growing up in the cities and villages of Africa.

Thank you for working on behalf of the American people for improving our schools, and fixing social security and passing a health care Bill of Rights; and making it possible for every American to believe that he or she will have a positive future in the twenty-first century. The hard work you have done and the example you have set by focusing on what really is significant in the lives of Americans every single day is a lesson to us all. And you have expanded that focus to include Africa. And that too is a lesson to us all, because the invaluable role you are playing in making this country a better place and in connecting what happens here in America with what happens elsewhere in the world, particularly in Africa, is a critical message for us all to hear and learn from.

I have said many times that I wish I could take every single American with me when I am privileged to travel abroad either with my husband or on my own. I wish I could take every young American boy or girl to see what it means to be an American in another part of the world and to understand what is happening in the cultures that are different from ours.

I wish I could take them as we look at our development and foreign assistant projects, both from our government as well as from private sector and the not-for profit sector; and the difference they are making in the lives of people throughout the globe. Because if we could, I think that more Americans could understand why you are here and why we have an overflow room this morning, to talk about a place that is still considered exotic and very far away for most Americans.

So by joining you today at this twenty eighth annual legislative conference, I am hoping to help put the spotlight on the future of Africa, and to make clear what my husband and all of you have tried to do time and again to demonstrate clearly that what happens to the future of Africa is directly relevant to our national security, our national interest, our place in the world.

As you know, this Administration, under the President's leadership, is deeply committed to our partnership with Africa, and to expanding the opportunities for growth and democracy throughout that continent. I know you will hear later from Secretary Slater that the President and

Vice President will speak at the final session and the dinner tomorrow night, and it is fitting that would be the audience that is addressed; because the Congressional Black Caucus has worked hard to open the opportunity to open the doors of opportunity to minorities and all Americans here in the United States, and has chosen, appropriately, the theme for this conference as, "Opening the Doors in Africa."

I think that really says it all. How do we open doors, and then enable people to walk through those doors themselves? As you know there were many prominent African-Americans with us on our trip to Africa, including of course, Congressman Payne and Congressman William Jefferson and Congressman Rangel and Congresswoman Maxine Waters, as well as Secretary Slater, Reverend Jesse Jackson, Bob Johnson, other distinguished Americans.

And there were many moments of extraordinary emotion during the trip, but one of the most emotional for me personally was on Goree Island, when the President asked our delegation of prominent African Americans to stand on that island that was such a symbol of tragedy and oppression; as it served as a place where slaves were sent forth, ripped from their families, and their homeland. But when Congressman Paine, Secretary Slater and the others stood, the people of Senegal who were there with us just rose as one, because they could see what it meant to open doors. They could see what the promise of opportunity and democracy really meant.

It was an extraordinary moment, because certainly those men and women who were with us who stood, like all other African Americans here, had been sold into bondage through their ancestors and now were coming back as extraordinary leaders of America, and as architects of a new partnership between us and Africa.

We come together today both as Africa is a shining light of promise and has posing problems. We know that. I see Congresswoman McKinney coming in, it is good to see you.

In the wake of the bombings of our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, we have to stand even more steadfastly with our African friends and allies against terrorism, against those who would intimidate and ruthlessly murder people in order to prevent a march toward freedom and democracy.

We know that there is the resumption of conflicts in the Congo and throughout Central Africa, but you know, I have often said to Americans who only know what they see in the headlines and on the TV news about Africa which are pictures of famine, or pictures of conflict, or unfortunate pictures of bombings, I say to them, "Suppose you had been living in Africa in the 1980's, and the conflicts in El Salvador or Nicaragua had been played on the news day in or day out, and that was all you know about North America. Wouldn't you have a rather perverse view about what happened in an entire continent?" Well, we cannot do the same to Africa.

Yes, there are problems in Africa. There are conflicts in Africa, there are setback in Africa. But there are in any continent where human beings live and work. That is the story of human history. And what we are trying to do is to stress that we need a more balanced and realistic picture of Africa. We cannot let the sensational story of the moment determine America's views about an

entire continent, just as we would not want to be considered in the wake of stories of the Guatemalan civil war that went on for years, if that had been focused on to our detriment.

It is important to realize that Africa, like many regions of the world is in the process of transition. And we should not, cannot expect this process to be easy or instantaneous. There will be setbacks. That is the nature of progress. And we have to recognize that Africa is a vast and diverse continent. It will not be homogeneous more so than North America, or South America or Asia is.

We have to build on and reinforce these successes so that they take on a life of their own and then influence others to be successful as well. The Administration continues to have two overarching policy goals for Africa: combating trans-national threats and fully integrating Africa into the global economy. These goals have never been more important than they are now. And I want to say a word about both of them.

Certainly combating transnational threats is something that we are paying a great deal of attention to in the Administration. I look out here and I see people who served in the Clinton administration and the NEC and the State Department -- even in the Defense Department -- who have been working as hard as we know how to work with African leaders to deal with these trans-national threats -- these conflicts that are holding back the development of so many people. And we are committed to doing all that the United States can do to try and work with the people of Africa to put those days behind them once and for all.

When we talk about fully integrating Africa into the global economy we have to, I believe, recognize what the global economy is doing now. We are in the midst of a very severe international financial challenge in many parts of the world. Now it may not be rational, it may not make a lot of sense, but problems in places as far from the United States and Africa as Indonesia or Malaysia or Japan, influence how investors, businesses and governments feel about investing in any developing economy.

If we are serious, as we must be, in helping to integrate Africa into the global economy, we must be realistic about the very difficult challenges which the global economy is posing to developing countries. And we have to do everything we can through the United States government to stabilize the international economic situation in order to provide opportunities for development to occur in Africa.

Now sometimes these issues are treated separately and individually, instead of being seen in a broader context. Like for example, what does the International Monetary Fund have to do with Africa? There are no countries there that are currently being looked at for the IMF funding, but if we do not stabilize those countries that are in financial crisis, I can guarantee you the opportunities for development and investment in Africa will be severely impacted disadvantageously.

It is very important for us to recognize that the IMF, with all of its problems, is the only tool we have in the world today that we have to combat this financial crisis. There is nothing that we can

do to say to individual investors who say, "Well there are problems in South Korea, I guess I better pull my money out of Brazil and South Africa." Because of the way they are reacting to the market, other than trying to create conditions through the infusion of both assistance and conditionality, that will send a message to the markets that has such an influence now because of the international movement of capital, that it is safe, it is appropriate to consider investing in places in Africa and the rest of the developing world.

So, the IMF is not one issue you stick over here and say, "Oh, I'm not happy with what they did there and I am not happy with what they did here," and all the rest of it, and say, "Yes, but I really want people to invest in developing Africa." Those two things in today's global economy are integrated together. There is no way to escape that. I wish there were frankly. There are many aspects of the global economy which I think are not good for developing countries in terms of providing the kinds of support that transition economies need.

But we have to -- as the President said in a very important speech in New York on Monday -- we have to create new architecture of financial stability, to replace what has been through attrition, undermined because of the changes in the global economy since the Second World War when we created that international system which consisted of the IMF among other things.

So I am here in part to say that we cannot talk about Africa as a separate entity and a separate challenge apart from what is going on in the rest of the world. We do not, for example, in the United States government fulfill the President's call to replenish the IMF, so that the IMF, our only tool available, will be ready to step in and prevent financial crisis in other developing countries that I believe the prospect for enticing development into Africa are severely undermined. This goes hand in hand together and every one of us must urge our Congress to fully fund the President's request of \$18 billion for the IMF.

Are there problems for the IMF? Yes, there are. Are there different tactics or strategies that they should fulfill? Yes, there are. But when the house is burning that is no time to reorganize the fire department, we need to make sure that we go ahead and do the funding necessary to provide the tools and then, we -- and when I say we I mean the United States, both our government and our private sector -- have to work hand in hand to create a better response and different kinds of strategies that will enable us number one of course to maybe foresee some of these problems, and intervene and help more quickly, and then to have better remedies for them when they occur.

Now we also have another piece of legislation that is in the Congress, and that is the African Trade Bill. I hope that what I have just said about the IMF demonstrates that again, you can't just take the African Trade Bill and put it up and say, "Let's just focus on that." We have to see it in context. And I would certainly urge this Congress, before it recesses, to act on the African Trade Bill.

And I would make the argument again, it is not a perfect bill. I for one have never seen a perfect bill. There is an old saying about two things that you should never watch being made: legislation and sausage. You know, I do not believe that there is such a thing as a perfect bill that does all the things that all of us would like to envision. We know that any piece of legislation is a result

of compromise and give and take; and that is one of the hallmarks of the democratic system. And that's not all bad.

But in that bill we have so many more tools that will encourage our private sector to take that leap of faith and invest in Africa. And we have good arguments about why they should take that leap of faith if they are given the incentives and the opportunities to do so by having our government, in a sense, provide through that trade bill, the sort of encouragement that they need.

We know that there are good stories about development occurring all over Africa. There is all kinds of evidence about the effects of micro enterprise and small scale business that demonstrate clearly that there are good, hard-working, committed people working at the grassroots level throughout Africa who have given some assistance and help, both financial and technical, can help build another future for themselves.

We know there is a commitment to self-sufficiency. There are leaders who are speaking the language of self-sufficiency and independence that is the music to the ears of every person I know in the United States. If they will open their ears and hear that message they will be more inclined to go and invest in Africa. So there is tremendous potential for trade and investments. We saw that time and time again on the President's trip. So the African Trade Bill will pry open the ears and the eyes of so many different business interests, and I believe would lead to significant investment in Africa.

Now there are many signs of progress throughout the continent. It is very encouraging that Nigeria is once again moving toward a return to democracy. That very important country has such an opportunity in the twenty-first century if only it would see its self-interest. And that is what we hope will occur, because democracy is the clearest root to fulfilling self-interest -- political and economic --and we hope that Nigeria will continue to make such steps.

Regional efforts brought down a brutal junta in Sierra Leone and brought back a democratically elected government. And some of those who perpetrated the ethnic slaughter in 1994 are now being brought to justice before the international criminal tribunal.

So there are many signs that the African renaissance is alive and well. It is not going to be an easy task, we know that. Nothing as challenging as a transition from many of the conditions that kept African countries down over the last thirty years will be easily wiped away. But I would like to remind all of us that in the 1960's, the prevailing economic opinion in looking both at African countries and at Asian countries was that African countries had more resources both natural and people, and were better positioned to be better economies than Asian countries.

Now what made the difference? Why did the standard of living in Asian countries rise continually? And despite their current problems why were the conditions put in place that would enable them to create large middle classes and provide a higher standard of living to the majority of their people, when many African countries did not fulfill that particular prediction?

Well you know as well as I do that leadership had a big role in determining how effective

African development was. And anyone who believes in this global economy that only the economy is important is forgetting the lessons of history. Political leadership and good government policy is critical to making sure economies work well. What we are finding in the Asian crisis is that the lack of good government policies and good political leadership that created conditions of transparency created conditions that were against corruption, that they really were unprepared to deal with the problems despite their economic well being.

You cannot separate political policies that create good conditions for economic development from the economic development itself. So now we are finally in the position in many parts of Africa where we have the leadership. We have political leaders who understand what it takes to create the conditions for economic success.

And we should do everything we can to stand with those leaders and encourage others to join their ranks. Because if we work with Africa to build a stronger future for the people of that continent, we are building a stronger future for ourselves.

So the President is a number one cheerleader for our partnership with Africa. There are strong members of Congress who understand why this is in America's interest -- in their constituent's interest -- and not just members of the Black Caucus, but others as well. What we have to do is take that message of realistic progress and make it the cornerstone of a policy that delivers on this partnership, and I hope that all of us will be committed to that and looking for creative strategies to bring that about.

Thank you very much.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 27, 1997

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN MAMMOGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

The Oval Office

12:17 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Secretary Shalala has just briefed me on the National Cancer Institute's new recommendations on mammography. These recommendations, based on the latest and best medical evidence, give clear, consistent guidance to women in our national fight against breast cancer. Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among women. It affects one in eight women in their lifetimes, and has touched the families of nearly every American, including my own.

We may not yet have a cure for breast cancer, but we do know that early detection and early treatment are our most potent weapons against this dread disease and we know that mammography can save lives. That is why it's important to send a clear, consistent message to women and to their families about when to start getting mammograms and how often to repeat them.

After careful study of the science, the National Cancer Advisory Board has now concluded that women between the ages of 40 and 49 should get a mammography examination for breast cancer every one or two years, in consultation with their doctors. The National Cancer Institute has now accepted these recommendations. Now women in their 40s will have clear guidance based on the best science, and action to match it.

Today I am taking action to bring Medicare, Medicaid and the federal employee health plans in line with the National Cancer Institute's recommendations. First, in the Medicare budget I am sending to Congress today I am making annual screening mammography exams, beginning at age 40, a covered expense without co-insurance or deductibles. Second, Secretary Shalala is sending a letter to state Medicaid directors urging them to also cover annual mammograms beginning at 40, and assuring them that the federal government will pay its matching share if they do so. And today, I am directing the Office of Personnel Management to require all federal health benefit plans to comply with the National Cancer Advisory Board's recommendations on mammogram screenings, beginning next year.

The federal government is doing its part to make sure women have both coverage and access to this potentially lifesaving test. I want to challenge private health insurance plans to do the same. They, too, should cover regular screening mammograms for women 40 and over.

Finally, we know there has been much discussion on this issue and a lot of confusion. That is why we are launching a major public education campaign to make sure every woman and every health care professional in America, that all of them are aware of these new recommendations. This is a major step forward in our fight against breast cancer.

In addition to Secretary Shalala, I want to thank National Cancer Advisory Board Chairperson, Dr. Barbara Rimer, and all the member of the Board, along with the NCI Director, Dr. Richard Klausner, for the fine job that they did in producing these recommendations. I also want to thank the First Lady, who could not be with us here because of her visit to Africa. She has devoted countless hours to educating women about the importance of mammography, and this is a happy day for her.

She has especially tried to educate older women to take advantage of the Medicare coverage of mammograms, because we know that too few of them still do. And that's the last point I would like to make. These guidelines and this coverage, it's all very good, but unless women are willing to actually take advantage of the coverage, we won't have the full benefit of the recommendations and the findings that have been made.

Now I'd like to turn the microphone over to Secretary Shalala to make a few comments.

SECRETARY SHALALA: Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership. One of the biggest fears that women have about breast cancer is the fear of not knowing what to do or when to do it. But today years of confusion have been replaced by a clear, consistent scientific recommendation for women between the ages of 40 and 49. According to a joint statement released today, the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society agree that mammography screening of women in their 40s is beneficial and supportable with the current scientific evidence. We can now tell all women over 40, talk to your doctor because regular mammography can save your life.

In fact, current evidence based on clinical trials finds that regular mammograms can reduce the death rate from breast cancer by about 17 percent for women between 40 and 49.

Now, to get the word out, we are developing materials and using our 1-800 number. It's 1-800-4-CANCER. The guidance we offer today to women in their 40s is a step forward, but it's only one piece of the Clinton administration overall strategy to fight breast cancer. Under the President's leadership, we have doubled the funding for breast cancer research, for treatment and prevention to more than \$500 million since 1993.

The President signed the landmark Kennedy-Kassebaum bill to ensure that all Americans, including those with preexisting conditions like breast cancer, can keep their insurance even if they lose or change their jobs. We're working hard to improve the quality of mammograms and improve access to quality mammograms. And that's why we're reaching out to women in every state, especially low-income women and women of color, to make certain that they know about and have access to mammograms.

And that's why, as the President indicated, the First Lady has led mammography awareness campaigns aimed at women over 65. Those women are the most at risk, and that's why, under the Mammography Quality Standards Act, American women can now have greater confidence in the safety and accuracy of their mammograms.

We also have created the first ever national action plan on breast cancer, a true public-private partnership that supports research and outreach and has a goal of the eradication of breast cancer. Let me say that all of us owe a huge debt and a lot of gratitude to the activists and survivors, leaders who have used their voices and their pain to stop breast cancer and to heal those for whom it strikes.

All of us should be very proud of the fact that mortality

rates for breast cancer are falling, not nearly enough, but they are finally going down in this country -- and all of us should be proud that with this announcement today, we have replaced confusion with clarity, and moved another step closer to the day when our grandchildren will have to turn to the history books to learn about a disease called breast cancer. Working together, we can and will make it happen. Thank you very much.

Q Mr. President, do you have any comment on the mass suicide in California?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, of course, all I know is what I read about it this morning and what I saw last night reported. But it's heartbreaking, it's sickening, it's shocking. I think it's important that we get as many facts as we can about this and try to determine what, in fact, motivated those people, and what all of us can do to make sure that there aren't other people thinking in that same way out there in our country, that aren't so isolated that they can create a world for themselves that may justify that kind of thing. It's very troubling to me. But I don't think I know enough to make a definitive comment about it.

Q Mr. President, switching gears on another subject, the Democratic Party emerged from this most recent election in the aftermath of all of these fundraising problems -- it seems to be in pretty bad shape financially -- enormous debt that they can't repay. What, if anything, can you do about this, and how much responsibility do you have to try to get the Democratic Party back into shape?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, a lot, and I have been doing a lot and I will do more. We knew that we would have to spend -- last year when it became obvious that our congressional candidates were going to be outspent, massively, we did everything we could to raise a good deal of money at the end. But the committees and the Democratic Committee went into debt with money that they could legally borrow in the hope of trying to be competitive. They actually did a pretty good job. They were still outspent, I figure, in the last 10 days, two weeks, probably four or five to one, in all of the contested races. But we knew that would happen and we knew it would take some time to pay it back. But I'm not particularly concerned about it; I think we will pay it back. And it was, I thought, important.

Keep in mind, we were at the bottom of the barrel in November of '94, and in 1995 we did a good job, I think, of building our party back and showing what the clear differences were between the two parties. And the previous leadership of the party deserves a lot of credit. We got up to a million small donors, and they're coming back now, they're beginning to make their contributions and that's very encouraging. So I think we'll get there. I'm not particularly concerned about it.

We made a deliberate decision to kind of downplay the Inaugural and not to try to tie too much of that to fundraising, so we're going to have work harder this year. But I've been doing some work, as you know, and I will continue to do more.

Q Do you think Governor Romer has second thoughts about some of the changes that previously eliminating contributions from subsidiaries of foreign companies and also non-U.S. citizens? He seems to be having some second thoughts about some of those proposals you made over the past few months.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, let me say, I still don't believe -- I think, on balance, it's better policy to say that people who can't vote shouldn't contribute. In terms of the subsidiaries, the real

problem there is the law says if the money is made in the United States it can be given in the United States. The problem is how do you ever know that. And so I think that he was trying to bend over backwards to get us off on the right foot.

But I'd be willing to talk to him about it, but the main thing is we're just going to have to get together and work hard and rally our troops and remind them of what we're trying to do here, how we're trying to balance the budget, what we're trying to do for education, what we're trying to do to move the country forward and get the efforts going. We've had several successful events this year. We just have to do more. And we knew -- what you have to do after an election, when we saw all this third party money and all these other things coming down the pike we wanted to give our members of Congress a chance to be competitive, and so we undertook to do so. And I'm glad we did, but we're just going to have to work double hard now to pay the money back, and we'll do that. We'll pay our debts and we'll make our budget this year.

Q Have you received any updates from Ambassador Ross or the Vice President?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q And what have they been?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, Ambassador Ross had a very good meeting with Chairman Arafat and he's proceeding now on his trip. And I don't have anything else to tell you, but he was encouraged by the response of Chairman Arafat to the matters that we discussed here before he left.

I started the day this morning with physical therapy and a talk with the Vice President in China, which was also good therapy. And he said to me that in every aspect his trip had gone quite well and better than he had anticipated and he was anxious to get back and give me a report on all the issues that we're concerned about. But I think the trip has been a real validation for our strategy of engagement with China, of taking our agreements, our disagreements, our matters of common interest, our matters of concern directly to them. And he is very pleased with the results so far, and I certainly am very pleased with the work he's done -- with the speech he gave on human rights and with all the work that he's done in China so far. I'm encouraged about it. I think the trip has been well worth making.

Q Have you seen that Janet Reno gave Louis Freeh a ringing endorsement this morning -- every confidence in his leadership at the FBI?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, as I said -- of course, she works with him every day, and that's why I said yesterday what I did. I was troubled by the headline in The New York Times story, but I did not know the facts. And I think it's important for me not to assume that someone has done or failed to do something that's adverse to the national interest before I know it's true. And she's the one that has to make those calls, and as she said in her comments, the system we have -- the President appoints the Director of the FBI, but the FBI is a part of the Justice Department, it's a part of the Justice system. And whenever you have dual responsibilities in government, you're going to have some time when you've got to make a close call.

And I still don't know -- as I said, I just literally don't know -- I could actually tell you whether I agreed or disagreed if I knew what -- if and what information had not been forthcoming to the National Security Council. I do believe that there should be a -- that

doubt should be resolved in favor of disclosure to the National Security Council of essential national security information. But the Attorney General has to resolve those things. And I trust her to do it. And so, what she said is fine by me.

Q Is there a problem if the President of United States -- a lot of Americans simply don't understand -- the President of the United States says, I don't know that there's a problem because I haven't necessarily been given --

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think there is. Yes, I think there is. If I knew that one existed, I would agree that there was a problem. But I don't know it. And I'm still not sure that there was. I just have to -- I have to trust the Attorney General to make sure that the National Security Council gets the information that we need to make good national security judgments here. I think, for example in the Kobar Towers incident, there is absolutely not a shred of evidence that there's anything that we have been denied. And so, if I knew that there was and I knew what it was and I thought there was a mistake, I'd be happy to say that there's an honest disagreement here, but I just don't know that there is one.

Q Has your administration been hamstrung in terms of ambassadorial appointments, appointments at the State Department and so forth because of all of these investigations on the campaign?

THE PRESIDENT: No, not at all. As a matter of fact, we've been working on getting ready for the next round of ambassadorial appointments. I approved a small number of them, oh, probably a couple of weeks ago so we could move in critical countries. But the others we're trying to do on a schedule which at least guarantees that all the ambassadors now serving will do the traditional three-year tour of duty, so we have some time on them. But we've worked very hard for the last month or so on that, and I don't see those two things as in conflict or a problem at all.

Thank you.

Q How do you feel today?

THE PRESIDENT: I feel fine. Every day I'm getting a little more mobile and I'm getting able to, you know, do a little more. I'll tell you one thing -- I wouldn't wish this on anyone. (Laughter.) But it's been a very enlightening experience, a very humbling experience. And the respect that I feel now for people who spend all day every day in a wheelchair, or people who spend all day every day in braces and on crutches is enormous.

The dignity and the strength of character that it takes to kind of organize your life and carry it out if you're always subject to some sort of significant physical disability is enormous. These are things that we all sometimes see, but when you've felt just a little taste of it, when you realize what it means to be able to just navigate and do the basic things in life -- just to dress yourself for the first time when you couldn't do it, for example -- it just makes you understand that the rest of us in society who have been fortunate enough to have full use of our physical facilities owe an enormous amount of respect and sensitivity to people who don't.

It's just been a stunning experience for me. I mean, I will never again see a person who has to deal with a disability in the same light again. I mean, it's just -- it's had a profound impact. It's nothing I didn't know before, but feeling it and knowing it are two different things.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

Q Like your doctor after you all the time?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. She just wants to make sure I don't
blow it.

Q I see her -- we see her right here.

THE PRESIDENT: There she is.

Q She's watching.

THE PRESIDENT: These crutches are quite good. This way
you can walk by putting your bad leg down and keeping the weight here --
otherwise, you have to just do this and then kind of do that. But if
you can walk, it's a lot of easier -- the chances of falling are less.

Q They're better than the traditional crutches.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, much better.

END

12:35 P.M. EST