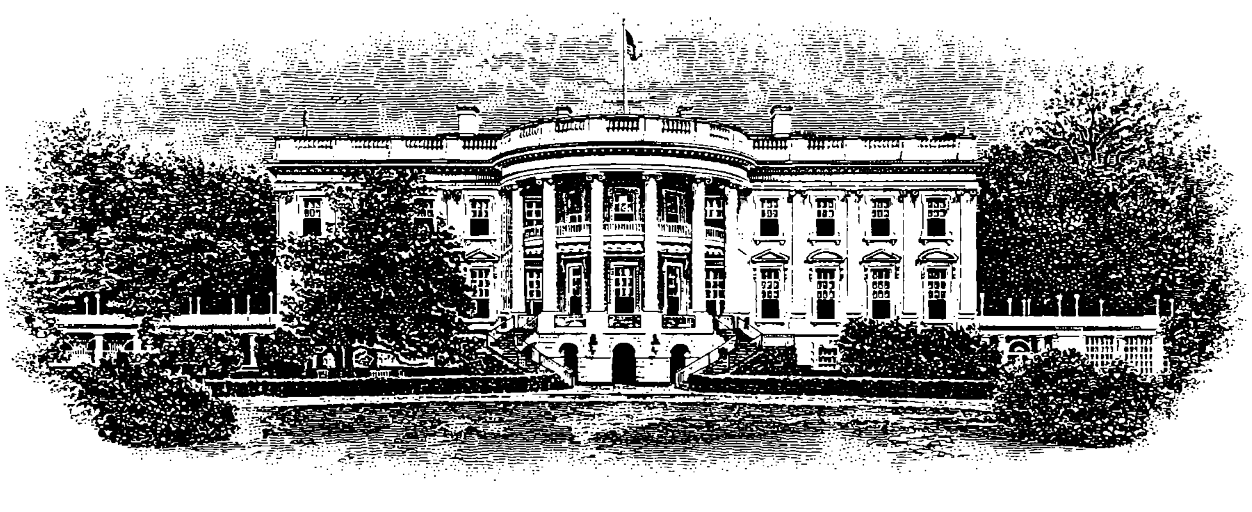
DEVORAH

LONG TERM CARE

The White House



Revised Final 9/19/00 8:45 a.m.

John Pollack

PRESIDENT WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON

STATEMENT ON SIGNING HR 4040

HELPING AMERICANS REACH FOR LONG-TERM CARE

THE WHITE HOUSE

September 19, 2000

Thank you, Joan Madaras (muh-DARE-us), for your daily courage and for coming here to share your story. Let me thank the members of Congress, for their leadership. I also want to pay special tribute to Janice Lachance (Director of the Office of Personnel Management), who has been instrumental in this important effort, as well as the National Association of Retired Federal Employees, the National Treasury Employees Union, the Retired Officers Association and the other groups that have worked with such determination.

It's hard to believe it was nearly eight years ago that I signed my first bill as President – the Family and Medical Leave Act, which has helped more than 25 million Americans take time off from work to care for a child or a sick loved one.

Today we come here in that same spirit, to sign the Long-Term Care Security Act. Over time, this legislation will help even more families meet the challenge of caring for our aging parents and grandparents.

In one sense, the growing challenge of long-term care is the price our nation is paying for some of the most remarkable gains in human history.

Thanks to growing prosperity, healthier lifestyles and the daily miracles of modern medicine, Americans are living longer and better lives than ever before.

In 1900, the average American couldn't expect to live beyond 50. Today, the average American's life expectancy is 77, and rising. Amazing as it sounds, there are currently more than 65,000 living Americans at least 100 years old. That's enough to fill up every seat in the Houston Astrodome, and still put two teams out on the field.

These numbers are only going to keep rising as the Baby Boomers age.

By 2030, one out of every five Americans will be 65 or older, and there will be 9 million over 85.

We all know there are many joys to aging – wisdom, retirement and grandchildren. But unfortunately, age can also come at the cost of our good health, independence, and sometimes a lifetime of savings. The cost of nursing home care now tops $50,000 a year – an extraordinary sum that few families can afford. Even home care is expensive, both in terms of direct costs and lost income, when a family member is the primary caregiver.

The legislation I am about to sign – the Long-Term Care Security Act – will help families plan ahead for such contingencies. It will enable current and former federal employees, military personnel, and all of their families to choose from a menu of quality, long-term care insurance options, and purchase their choice at reduced group rates.

That means that as many as 13 million people will now be able to plan for the future, without the fear of financial ruin, should costly care ever become necessary.

This legislation will also spur more American companies to offer their employees the option of affordable, high-quality, long-term care insurance.

The insurance industry has called our legislation "a model for private-sector employers." And we thank them for that support.

We are also pleased that this groundbreaking legislation has enjoyed strong bipartisan backing. It is further proof that, when we put progress before partisanship, we can tackle our country's toughest challenges together.

Today's signing represents an important step towards meeting the tremendous demographic and health-care challenges that confront our aging population.

The Long-Term Care Security Act helps many families plan for the future by enabling them to buy good insurance. However, we cannot be satisfied with this accomplishment. There are millions of people already chronically ill who can't buy insurance at any price, and need help right now.

As we speak, in homes all across the country, seven million Americans are caring for an elderly loved one.

For some, it is an easy joy – a chance to share memories over a cup of coffee. For others, it means constant labor, or watching the terrible shroud of Alzheimer's transform a soul mate into a stranger.

These are burdens shouldered every day, month after month, with remarkable determination and love.

We need to lighten their load, and do it this year. Congress should pass our $3,000 tax credit to provide chronically ill Americans and their families with desperately needed financial relief.

This $27 billion initiative would eventually cover up to 60% of the costs that families incur providing long-term care.

This is the kind of tax cut that American families need. It's a tax cut we can afford. It's a tax cut that will improve the lives of those who need help the most.

And we should do something else that is long overdue. After 5 years of waiting, we should finally reauthorize the Older Americans Act.

For more than 35 years, it has helped millions of seniors lead more independent lives by funding vital, everyday basics like transportation and meals-on-wheels. And as we reauthorize this legislation, we should strengthen it by funding our Caregivers' Initiative.

This will provide families with the information, counseling and support services they need to sustain their selfless mission.

Finally, there's one more long-term care issue Congress needs to address this fall: passing a voluntary, affordable Medicare prescription drug benefit.

Studies show that seniors who lack prescription drug coverage are twice as likely to be admitted to nursing homes as those who have coverage. But we don't need studies to tell us that seniors should be able to get the prescription drugs they need, and get them at a cost they can afford. That's just common sense.

In this time of unprecedented prosperity, we have a golden opportunity to meet the challenges of an aging American population. Now is the time for Congress to act in the same bipartisan spirit that produced the Long-Term Care Security Act, which we celebrate today.

It has often been said that the truest measure of a society is the manner in which it raises its children, and cares for those in their twilight years. Today, in the sunshine of our prosperity, let us recommit ourselves to this ideal – that every older American might know our nation's profound gratitude, and live out their days with dignity, security, and love. Thank you.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

THE DIRECTOR

September 18, 2000

'00 SEP 18 AM11:39

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Enrolled Bill H.R. 4040 - Long Term Care Security Act and Federal Erroneous Retirement Coverage Corrections Act
Sponsors - Rep. Scarborough (R) FL and 28 others

Last Day for Action

September 26, 2000 - Tuesday

Purpose

(1) Requires the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to develop and administer a long-term care insurance program for Federal employees and annuitants, active and retired members of the uniformed services, and certain qualified relatives; and (2) provides for the correction of retirement coverage errors affecting certain Federal employees and their families.

Agency Recommendations

Office of Management and Budget (OMB)	Approval (Signing statement attached)
Office of Personnel Management	Approval (Signing statement attached)
Department of Commerce	Approval (Informally)
Department of Defense	Approval (Informally)
Social Security Administration	Approval (Informally)
Department of Veterans Affairs	Defers to OPM (Informally)
Department of Health and Human Services	No objection (Informally)
Department of State	No objection (Informally)
Department of Transportation	No objection (Informally)
Department of the Treasury	No objection (Informally)
Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board	No objection (Informally)
Department of Justice	No comment (Informally)
Central Intelligence Agency	No comment (Informally)
General Services Administration	No comment (Informally)
Tennessee Valley Authority	No comment (Informally)
U.S. Postal Service	No recommendation

Discussion

Long-Term Care Insurance. On January 4, 1999, you announced an initiative to improve access to long-term care for all Americans. Among other things, the plan included providing long-term care insurance to Federal employees and retirees, and their family members. H.R. 4040 implements this part of your plan by requiring OPM to make available group long-term care insurance to Federal employees and annuitants, active and retired members of the uniformed services, employees and annuitants of the U.S. Postal Service and the Tennessee Valley Authority, and relatives of these individuals. Eligible relatives would include: (1) spouses; (2) parents, stepparents, and parents-in-law (of current Federal employees and active members of the uniformed services); and (3) over 18 year-old children, stepchildren, and adopted children. (The Administration's proposal did not cover members of the uniformed services, the U.S. Postal Service, and the Tennessee Valley Authority.)

Under H.R. 4040, OPM would be authorized to enter into seven-year contracts with one or more qualified insurance carriers, or consortiums of carriers, that are licensed to issue long-term care insurance in all States. Contracts would be awarded on the basis of contractor qualifications, price, and reasonable competition. The contracts would not be automatically renewable. Each contract would have to include detailed statements of benefits, premium charges, terms of enrollment, limitations, and any other terms and conditions mutually agreed to by the carrier(s) and OPM. Each contract also would have to specify procedures to resolve any dispute regarding payment of claims and benefits. During the contract period, premiums could be adjusted only by mutual agreement between OPM and the carrier(s). In addition, contracts would have to provide for portability of coverage, ensuring that policies cannot be terminated because of a change in the individual's status, such as separation from service or divorce. The contracts for long-term care would supersede and preempt State and local laws governing long-term care insurance or contracts and would be exempt from the cost accounting standards issued by the OMB's Office of Federal Procurement Policy.

Under H.R. 4040, the long-term care insurance policy offered to Federal employees and others would be guaranteed renewable, but not guaranteed issue. (For example, policies would not have to be issued to people who are already in need of long-term care.) Coverage would be provided for a range of services, including personal care, home health care, adult day care, and nursing home care. H.R. 4040 would require that the enrollee pay the full cost of the insurance policy, either through withholding from pay or retirement benefits or through direct payments to the carrier(s). The administrative and implementation costs for the new program would be paid out of the Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Trust Fund and would be reimbursed to the FEGLI Trust Fund on a pro rata basis by the carrier(s).

H.R. 4040 would require the General Accounting Office to compare the competitiveness of the new long-term care insurance program with group and individual coverage available in the private insurance market and submit a written evaluation to the President, OPM, and Congress before the end of the third and fifth years of the program. Within 180 days of receiving the second report, the President (or his designee) would be required to recommend to designated congressional committees the continuation, modification, or termination of the program. (The Department of Justice has supplied signing statement language construing this requirement as precatory because it conflicts with the Recommendations Clause of the Constitution.) The bill would also require OPM to ensure that each individual applying for long-term care insurance has information regarding the general advantages and disadvantages of the insurance policy and any other information necessary to make an informed decision about obtaining coverage. The enrolled bill would require that long-term care insurance coverage be available by October 2002.

Retirement Coverage Errors. H.R. 4040 also includes an unrelated provision that is designed to rectify certain retirement coverage errors affecting Federal employees under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and Federal Employees' Retirement System (FERS). In 1984, the Federal Government began a transition from CSRS to FERS. As government agencies carried out the transition, according to OPM, an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 employees were placed in the wrong retirement system. Under current law, Federal agencies are required to move an employee to the correct retirement system when a retirement coverage error is discovered, retroactive to the original date of the error. Many of the coverage errors have been corrected, while others have not yet been discovered. The coverage error situations that are most likely to place the employee at a disadvantage are the ones that negatively affect the employee's Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) participation (typically, where an employee has been enrolled in CSRS, but should be in FERS). The TSP is a defined contribution plan that is similar to private sector tax-deferred 401(k) savings plans.

H.R. 4040 would permit employees, former employees, retirees, and survivors affected by a retirement coverage error to choose between corrected retirement coverage as required under current law or making their incorrect coverage permanent. Employees who have been incorrectly covered by CSRS could elect FERS or CSRS Offset (which would give the employee a CSRS-equivalent benefit in the form of a Social Security benefit plus a CSRS benefit that is reduced by the amount of the Social Security benefit). Employees who were erroneously placed in FERS would be permitted to choose between CSRS and CSRS Offset. Individuals whose coverage errors have not been corrected would have 180 days after the discovery of the error to make an election; individuals whose coverage errors have already been fixed would have 18 months after the issuance of final regulations to make their election. All elections would be irrevocable, and individuals who did not make an election would remain in their current coverage. Retirement coverage errors lasting less than three years after December 31, 1986, would not be covered by H.R. 4040.

H.R. 4040 would also require that the missed agency contributions to employees' TSP accounts be paid by the particular Federal agency responsible for individual errors out of their existing discretionary funds. Employees would be responsible for their "missed" contributions to TSP accounts. (Under current law and TSP rules, employees who are covered under the wrong retirement plan and are corrected to a different plan may make retroactive employee contributions and receive retroactive employer contributions.) In addition, Federal agencies would be required to report to the Commissioner of Social Security the total wages paid each individual during each year of erroneous CSRS coverage and any other information needed under the Social Security Act. The bill would provide for the transfer from the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund to the General Fund of the Treasury of a specified amount relating to Social Security employee taxes, and would require the employing agency to pay the Social Security employer tax due for those individuals erroneously placed in CSRS. H.R. 4040 would also authorize the Director of OPM to: (1) extend deadlines for making elections under the bill; (2) reimburse individuals for reasonable expenses and monetary losses incurred as a direct result of the retirement coverage error; and (3) waive repayments required by the bill.

Prior to final passage of H.R. 4040, the House, to avoid a jurisdictional problem, deleted language affecting Social Security and tax liability coverage for certain Federal employees. This deletion could have the effect of preventing these employees from receiving Social Security retirement credit. The appropriate committees of Congress are aware that the deleted language needs to be restored and have indicated to OPM and SSA that the necessary corrections will be made in a technical correction bill.

Pay-As-You-Go Scoring

H.R. 4040 would affect direct spending; therefore, it is subject to the pay-as-you-go requirement of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990. This Office estimates that H.R. 4040 would increase direct spending by $7 million in FY 2001 and a total of $9 million during FYs 2001-2005.

Conclusion and Recommendations

OPM strongly recommends approval of H.R. 4040. In its views letter, OPM states that the bill "not only will provide long-awaited relief to many Federal employees and their families who, through no fault of their own, find they are affected by retirement coverage errors, but also offers an opportunity for members of the Federal community and their families to participate in a long-term care insurance program that can serve as a model for other employers in addressing the challenges of a new century."

We join OPM, Defense, and other concerned agencies in recommending approval of H.R. 4040, which passed the House by voice vote and the Senate by unanimous consent. Attached for your consideration is a draft signing statement that was prepared by OPM and edited by this Office. It notes that addressing the needs of an aging society is one of your highest priorities and details your January 1999 long-term care initiative. It also highlights the range of services that will be provided by the new group insurance program and states that premiums are expected to be 15 to 20 percent lower than what enrollees would pay for individual policies. The draft signing statement was reviewed and approved by the Departments of HHS, Justice, Defense, and the Treasury, OPM, SSA, the Domestic Policy Council staff, the White House Offices of Counsel and Legislative Affairs, and this Office.

Jacob J. Lew
Director

Enclosures

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Today, I am very pleased to sign into law H.R. 4040, which includes two titles – the "Long-Term Care Security Act" and the "Federal Erroneous Retirement Coverage Corrections Act." This bill authorizes the creation of a new program of group long-term care insurance for Federal employees and annuitants, active and retired members of the uniformed services, employees and annuitants of the U.S. Postal Service and the Tennessee Valley Authority, and relatives of these individuals. It also provides for a more equitable way to correct certain retirement coverage errors affecting thousands of Federal employees and their families.

Addressing the needs of an aging society has been one of my highest priorities. The retirement of the baby boom generation will have profound effects not only on Medicare and Social Security but on long-term care. Millions more seniors will need care from home and community-based providers, nursing homes, and families. Yet, today's system is a patchwork that often does not serve the needs of people with chronic illnesses. To address this, I announced a multi-pronged long-term care initiative in early 1999. It tackles the complex problem of long-term care through: (1) creating a $3,000 tax credit to help people with long-term care needs or the families who care for them; (2) providing funding for services that support family caregivers of older persons; (3) improving equity in Medicaid eligibility for people in home- and community-based settings; (4) encouraging partnerships between low-income housing for the elderly and Medicaid; and (5) encouraging the purchase of quality private long-term care insurance by Federal employees. H.R. 4040, which is bipartisan, consensus legislation, implements the portion of the initiative concerning long-term care insurance for Federal employees.

The bill I am signing today will improve the availability and quality of private long-term care insurance by allowing, for the first time, families of Federal employees to access a high-quality, affordable long-term care insurance option through the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). OPM will contract for benefits with one or more private contractors, enabling the agency to obtain the best value for the entire Federal family. OPM will ensure that policies have important consumer protections that are generally not available in individual insurance policies, such as full portability, and that enrollees will have the option to purchase policies that include inflation and non-forfeiture protections. By using the size of the Federal workforce family – about 13 million people – as leverage, the Federal Government will be able to provide long-term care insurance at group rates expected to be 15 to 20 percent lower than individual rates. Coverage will be provided for a range of services, including personal care, home health care, adult day care, and nursing home care.

Our hope is that, by making high-quality private long-term care coverage available to the Federal family at negotiated group rates, we will continue to serve as a model to other employers across the Nation. This policy is also the most responsible, next step in promoting private long-term care insurance. Building on the financial incentives I signed into law in 1996, this policy will increase both the number of people with long-term care coverage and the quality of such coverage – increasing confidence in this growing market as people start planning for their own future long-term care needs.

H.R. 4040 also provides a comprehensive solution to the problems faced by many Federal employees and their families who, through no fault of their own, are affected by retirement coverage errors. Unlike current law, which directs how coverage errors will be corrected, it permits those placed in the wrong retirement coverage to choose the coverage that best serves their needs and preferences. This new authority to correct erroneous retirement enrollments and the new long-term care insurance program will greatly enhance the quality of life for Federal employees and members of the Armed Forces. I applaud the bipartisan coalition and OPM Director Lachance for their yeoman efforts in developing and passing this important bill.

In approving H.R. 4040, I note that section 1002 of the bill (new section 9003(d)(3) of title 5, U.S. Code) provides that "the President (or his designee) shall submit to [specified congressional committees] a written recommendation as to whether the program . . . should be continued without modification, terminated, or restructured." The Recommendations Clause of the Constitution provides that the President "shall from time to time . . . recommend to [Congress] . . . such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient." That Clause protects the President's authority to formulate and present his own recommendations, which includes the power to decline to offer any recommendation. Accordingly, to avoid any infringement on the President's constitutionally protected policy-making prerogatives, I shall construe this provision not to extend to the submission of recommendations that the President finds it unnecessary or inexpedient to present.

It gives me great pleasure to sign H.R. 4040 into law. I welcome the opportunity to offer Federal employees, members of the Armed Forces, and their families, this additional option to care for their aging parents, and let their children care for them with dignity and financial security. I look forward to working with Congress to pass the other critical elements of my plan to improve long-term care for all Americans.

STATEMENT
<u>(draft 5)</u>
Janice R. Lachance
SIGNING CEREMONY
H.R. 4040 Long-Term Care Security Act
Rose Garden, White House
Tuesday, September 19, 2000

Welcome, [ACKNOWLEDGEMENT LIST].

It is a pleasure to be here with you today at the White House for this very special event -- the signing into law of the "Long-Term Care Security Act."

As the Director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, the Federal Government's human resources agency -- representing some 10 million Federal employees, retirees, and their families -- I hear from many members of the Federal workforce who are struggling with the challenges of caring for loved ones who require assistance with the everyday activities of life that we take for granted.

Families today provide <u>80 percent</u> of the long-term care needed by older persons <u>and</u> can reasonably expect to spend <u>more time</u> caring for an older relative than caring for their own children. They need our help.

This is an issue very near and dear to my own heart. I think about MY parents -- who are here in the audience today -- and how we, as a family, are going to deal with the spiraling increases in long-term care costs.

And how families across the country are handling the heart-wrenching choices they are sometimes forced to make on a daily basis to provide for the care and comfort of their loved ones in their later years.

Since President Clinton and Vice President Gore took office in 1993, they recognized an obligation to address this issue decisively and comprehensively. As sons and daughters, and as a nation, we must do all we can to keep our parents from being crushed by debt because of their need for care.

We, as a nation, must ensure they get the right care for their needs, and that it is quality care. And we must make sure they get ALL the long-term care they need.

This is not just a Federal employee issue. Millions of Americans today face a crisis of care in meeting long term care needs for themselves, for their children, and for their parents.

So, two years ago in January, I stood on this stage with President Clinton, Vice President Gore, and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton when they unveiled a comprehensive program to deal with these needs. This program included a long-term tax credit designed to provide immediate support and assistance for the millions of Americans who need help today.

The President also outlined a series of steps to address the broad-based and varied long-term care needs of all Americans. He offered proposals to educate the elderly and people with disabilities about long-term care options, and to promote promising new strategies for long-term care for the 21st century.

We are here today to fulfill one of those commitments. The Federal government will now be able to design a long-term care insurance package that offers a full range of services to meet the needs of civilian and military Federal employees, retirees, and their families.

This is an important, and historic, starting point. By making private long-term care insurance available to all the members of the Federal family at negotiated group rates, we will, once again, serve as a model to other employers across the nation, while also heightening our nation's awareness of the growing need to address the issue of long-term care for the future of all Americans.

These are real needs. And whether or not you are a member of the Federal workforce, all of us will have to face these issues. That is why the President's long-term care tax credit deserves early attention and quick action.

This tax credit offers immediate relief to thousands of Americans and it provides a solid framework for the additional long-term care proposals championed by the President.

The need for Congressional action on this issue today is evident most clearly in the touching stories we hear from Americans who've had to confront this issue in their own lives. It gives me great pleasure to introduce [a real person]. She is a someone who understands all too well the critical need for a long-term care solution for all Americans....

-- END --

MATT BENNETT

FROM : MADARAS_FAMILY!   FAX NO. : 3012510503   Sep. 18 2000 09:20PM P:

DRAFT:STATEMENT BY JOAN MADARAS

Thank you Director LaChance.

Good morning, Mr. President, members of Congress, and other distinguished guests.

We are here today to celebrate, because the Congress has taken an important first step towards addressing the long term care needs of Americans nationwide.

But I am here to remind you that we have much more work to do.

My mother who has the beginning stages of Alzheimers has been living with us for five years. When her memory losses began to affect her basic daily activities like eating properly and making sure she ~~would get~~ Gets dressed in the morning we asked her to come live with us. It was clear that it was no longer safe for her to live on her own.

My son who is 10, also has long term care needs. Matthew was born with a genetic disorder which means he can't really walk on his own, eat on his own, or communicate his needs to us. He uses a nightly feeding tube to thrive and is still incontinent. He will probably live with my husband and me for the rest of our lives.

Our entire family has had to adjust to the round-the-clock health care needs of my mother and my son. My Husband and I have staggered our work schedules so that someone is always home—I work part time at our local church from 9 to 2 in the afternoon and my husband works his job from 3 to midnight. He returns Long after my kids are asleep.

It's really important to me to be able to keep my family together. I don't want to put my son or my mother in a nursing home. But the long hours are hard on my husband and on me. Our house is crowded as you can imagine with three kids, my husband and I, my mother and our dog in a townhouse. My children see their father only on weekends. And caring for my son and my mother costs thousands of dollars a year.

Mr. President, I don't think that caring for my family is anyone's job but our own. But a little help financially would go a long way towards the cost of caring for both my mother and my son around the clock. We would install a bathroom in my mother's room. If she didn't have to walk up and downs stairs all the time, it might be easier for her to remain continent. We would also buy hearing aids for my son. It is difficult for him to communicate and having some hearing loss holds him back developmentally. And it would mean a lot if we could access respite care periodically—just to have a break every once in a while from what is essentially a full time job.

I congratulate everyone here today on your legislative achievement. This bill will help many families purchase the long-term care insurance they need. But Mr. President, there are many more families like me who need help with these burdens right now.

I know that everyone here cares about this issue, and I want to do the right thing for the millions of people out there who are just like me. I am asking you to remember my story as you return to work this Fall, and to provide caregivers across the country with the assistance we need. I thank the Alzheimers' Association for being there for us. My husband just rode his bike 185 miles on the Canal for their wonderful cause.

And now, it is my honor to introduce the man who has fought to help families like mine for the past seven and a half years---The President of the United States, William Jefferson Clinton.

Final 9/18/00 9:15 p.m.
John Pollack

PRESIDENT WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON
STATEMENT ON SIGNING HR 4040
HELPING AMERICANS REACH FOR LONG-TERM CARE
THE WHITE HOUSE
September 19, 2000

Thank you, Joan Madaras (muh-DARE-us), for your daily courage and for coming here to share your story. Let me thank the members of Congress, for their leadership. I also want to pay special tribute to Janice Lachance (Director of the Office of Personnel Management), who has been instrumental in this important effort, as well as the National Association of Retired Federal Employees, the National Treasury Employees Union, the Retired Officers Association and the other groups that have worked with such determination.

It's hard to believe it was nearly eight years ago that I signed my first bill as President – the Family and Medical Leave Act, which has helped more than 25 million Americans take time off from work to care for a child or a sick loved one. Today we come here in that same spirit, to sign the Long-Term Care Security Act. Over time, this legislation will help even more families meet the challenge of caring for our aging parents and grandparents.

In one sense, the growing challenge of long-term care is the price our nation is paying for some of the most remarkable gains in human history. Thanks to growing prosperity, healthier lifestyles and the daily miracles of modern medicine, Americans are living longer and better lives than ever before.

In 1900, the average American couldn't expect to live beyond 50. Today, the average American's life expectancy is 77, and rising. Amazing as it sounds, there are currently more than 65,000 living Americans at least 100 years old. That's enough to fill up every seat in the Houston Astrodome, and still put two teams out on the field.

These numbers are only going to keep rising as the Baby Boomers age. By 2030, one out of every five Americans will be 65 or older, and there will be 9 million over 85.

We all know there are many joys to aging – wisdom, retirement and grandchildren. But unfortunately, age can also come at the cost of our good health, independence, and sometimes a lifetime of savings. The cost of nursing home care now tops $50,000 a year – an extraordinary sum that few families can afford. Even home care is expensive, both in terms of direct costs and lost income, when a family member is the primary caregiver.

The legislation I am about to sign – the Long-Term Care Security Act – will help families plan ahead for such contingencies. It will enable current and former federal employees, military personnel, and all of their families to choose from a menu of quality, long-term care insurance options, and purchase their choice at reduced group rates. That means that as many as 13 million people will now be able to plan for the future, without the fear of financial ruin, should costly care ever become necessary.

This legislation will also benefit the public at large, by spurring more American companies to offer their employees the option of affordable, high-quality, long-term care insurance that will be there when they need it. The insurance industry itself is enthusiastic about this prospect, calling our legislation "a model for private-sector employers." And we thank them for that support.

We are also pleased that this groundbreaking legislation has enjoyed strong bipartisan backing. It is further proof that, when we put progress before partisanship, we can tackle our country's toughest challenges together.

Today's signing represents an important step towards meeting the tremendous demographic and health-care challenges that confront our aging population. The Long-Term Care Security Act helps many families plan for the future by enabling them to buy good insurance. However, we cannot be satisfied with this accomplishment. There are millions of people already chronically ill who can't buy insurance at any price, and need help right now.

As we speak, in homes all across the country, seven million Americans are caring for an elderly loved one. For some, it is an easy joy – a chance to share memories over a cup of coffee, or to sit quietly on the front porch. For others, it means constant labor, or watching the terrible shroud of Alzheimer's transform a soul mate into a stranger. Still more are struggling with the high cost of prescription drugs. These are burdens shouldered every day, week after week and month after month, with remarkable determination and love.

We need to lighten their load, and do it this year. Congress should pass our $3,000 tax credit to provide chronically ill Americans and their families with desperately needed financial relief. This $27 billion initiative would eventually cover up to 60% of the costs that families incur providing long-term care.

This is the kind of tax cut that American families need. It's a tax cut we can afford. It's a tax cut that will improve the lives of those who need help the most.

And we should do something else, too. Something that is long overdue. After 5 years of waiting, we should finally reauthorize the Older Americans Act. For more than 35 years, the OAA has helped millions of seniors lead more independent lives by enabling communities to offer them vital, everyday basics like transportation and meals-on-wheels. And as we reauthorize this legislation, we should strengthen it by funding our Caregivers' Initiative. This will provide families with the information, counseling and support services they need to sustain their selfless mission, day in and day out.

Finally, there's one more long-term care issue Congress needs to address this fall: passing a voluntary, affordable Medicare prescription drug benefit. Studies show that seniors who lack prescription drug coverage are twice as likely to be admitted to nursing homes as those who have coverage. But we don't need studies to tell us that seniors should be able to get the prescription drugs they need, and get them at a cost they can afford. That's just common sense.

In this time of unprecedented prosperity, we have a golden opportunity to meet the challenges of an aging American population. Now is the time for Congress to act in the same bipartisan spirit that produced the Long-Term Care Security Act, which we celebrate today.

It has often been said that the truest measure of a society is the manner in which it raises its children, and cares for those in their twilight years. Today, in the sunshine of our prosperity, let us recommit ourselves to this ideal – that every older American might know our nation's profound gratitude, and live out their days with dignity, security, and love.

Thank you.

PRESIDENT CLINTON ENACTS LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE TO FEDERAL WORKERS
Urges the Congress to Act Now to Assist All Families with Long-Term Care Needs
September 19, 2000

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Breaking News
FROM A.P.

The New York Times ON THE WEB

September 19, 2000

E-Mail This Article

Clinton To Sign Insurance Bill

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Filed at 3:11 a.m. ET

WASHINGTON (AP) -- President Clinton thinks a long-term care insurance program that Congress approved for federal employees could serve as a model for helping all Americans deal with chronic illnesses, an administration official said.

While Clinton on Tuesday signs a bill giving government workers help with long-term care costs, he was expected to make a pitch for two other health care measures he wants Congress to pass before he leaves office.

Clinton also was expected to note that while the legislation is a step forward, there are chronically ill people of all ages who can't buy long-term care insurance at any price because of a pre-existing condition.

The president was expected to use the bill signing ceremony as an opportunity to push his proposed $3,000 tax credit for long-term care as well as an initiative to provide funding to help people providing care to older relatives. This measure would provide funding for information-referral services and counseling to help family members handle the emotional strain of caring for chronically ill relatives.

Congress passed the long-term care insurance bill before its August recess and sent it to the White House last week. It calls for setting up a program that would make long term care available to federal employees, members of the uniformed services, and civilian and military retirees.

E-Mail This Article

OPM NEWS
RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 19, 2000

Contact: Edmund Byrnes
202-606-2572 or edbyrnes@opm.gov

President Signs Long-Term Care Bill

Washington, DC – With President Clinton's signature of the Long-Term Care Security Act in a Rose Garden ceremony, long-term care insurance will become a reality for federal workers, members of the military, retirees and their families. It is the first new benefit offered to federal employees since the inception of the Federal Employees Retirement System, with its Thrift Savings Plan component, in June 1986.

"I am thrilled that long-term care coverage will be available to the entire federal family," said U.S. Office of Personnel Management Director Janice R. Lachance at the Rose Garden event. "We must do everything we can to ease the burden of caring for older relatives, and we must provide a way to plan for the years when we all will most need assistance."

OPM will use the formidable purchasing power of the 13 million eligible members of the federal family to negotiate savings of 15% to 20% on commercially available rates.

The legislation authorizes OPM to design a long-term care package that offers flexible benefit options to meet the diverse needs of the federal family. A range of services including home health care, adult day care and nursing home care will be covered. The program will be available to civilian and military employees, retirees, and their eligible family members.

Long-term care coverage will become available no later than October 2002.

-end-

OPM NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Edmund Byrnes
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President Signs Retirement Coverage Error Correction Bill into Law

Washington, DC – President Clinton has signed The Federal Erroneous Retirement Coverage Corrections Act (FERCCA) to solve a long-standing problem for federal employees who have been unintentionally enrolled in the wrong retirement plan.

"I am delighted with this legislation, which received bipartisan support, because it will bring fair and equitable relief to thousands of federal employees and their families," said U.S. Office of Personnel Management Director (OPM) Janice R. Lachance.

Most of the errors occurred in the mid-1980s when the federal government created the Federal Employees Retirement System for newly-hired employees, while leaving the older Civil Service Retirement System in effect for current employees. The two plans and a smaller, hybrid plan created at the same time cover more than 2.6 million employees, only a small fraction of which ended up in the wrong system. The new law will allow OPM to remedy these errors and ensure that employees who were placed in the wrong system for three years or more will not be harmed. In most cases, affected employees will have a choice, and can decide which retirement plan will best meet their needs.

"OPM has been hard at work preparing for quick implementation of the law, and we will be issuing regulations as quickly as possible," Lachance said. "OPM will assure that affected employees are identified and fully counseled about the effect of the bill on them and the options they will have. In addition, special arrangements will be made to work with individuals and agencies to assist eligible employees who wish to retire immediately, and to ensure that other employees will not be adversely impacted by the time needed to complete the government-wide implementation."

OPM has an e-mail list, open to anyone who wants to sign up and stay up to date about implementation of the FERCCA. Further information is available on the OPM web site at http://www.opm.gov/benefits/correction/index.htm.

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