they've become emotionally charged around the whole issue of teen pregnancy, but quite apart from that—you know, when I was a kid, we got our ear tests, we got our shots, we got a lot of things in the schools that don't happen very often any more. So a lot of these services, if you want access to be there, in my judgment, are going to have to be provided either in or quite near schools if we're going to reach these children as we should.

Thank you very much.

[*At this point, the President was presented a gift.*]

The President. I want to say one thing: As an ardent basketball fan, Lou made one minor error when he compared the victory of Schumer with the assault weapons with the victory of the Knicks over the Bulls. And it's very important for health care, so I'm going to leave you with this: The Knicks overcame a 15-point deficit and beat the Bulls with fabulous defense. Schumer passed the assault weapons ban by playing offense. We cannot pass health care unless we play offense, and that means people like you have to tell the Members of Congress it's okay for them to play offense and solve this problem.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:07 p.m. in the Trianon Ballroom at the New York Hilton.

Exchange With Reporters During a Meeting With Health Care Letter Writers in New York City

May 9, 1994

Haiti

Q. Mr. President, Lawton Chiles is worried that your new refugee policy is going to put an undue burden on his State. Is there anything you can say to allay his concerns?

The President. Yes, I've already talked to him. We had a long talk about it. He just wants to make sure we don't start it until we have the capacity to implement it, which is what I said yesterday.

Q. Are you going to seek prior congressional authorization before you would consider sending troops to Haiti?

The President. I don't have anything further to say. I'm not going to discuss that option until it becomes appropriate.

Press Secretary Myers. Thank you.

Health Care Reform

Q. Mr. President, what did you gain by just meeting these people just now? Some insight into the average American's mind on health care?

The President. Well, these are—we received three letters from people who are here who either can't get health insurance or lost it, or people who think they have to stop caring for their children to go to work. There are all kinds of—the people who wrote me these letters—maybe I should let them speak for themselves—are often lost in the debate in Washington. Millions and millions of people whose hopes and whose whole lives are riding on the outcome of this health care debate are almost exclusively unorganized. They very often represent far more people than the people who have organized who are lobbying Congress, who are saying one thing or another about this health care bill. But they're in every community; they're in every work force; they're in every kind of situation.

Why don't we just—I don't know if you've met them already, but—did you introduce yourself to everybody here? Tell them who you are and what you do.

Sally Gorsline. I'm Sally Gorsline. I'm from Kingston, New York.

The President. And——

Ms. Gorsline. I had an illness, and I went bankrupt because I didn't have health insurance.

The President. And your friends came with you, right?

Ms. Gorsline. This is my daughter, Stephanie, and my future son-in-law, Bill.

The President. Who also has no health insurance.

Cathy Rosen. My name is Cathy Rosen. I'm from New Rochelle, New York. And I had coverage, but my boss went out of business, and I wound up taking up another job. And I have no insurance coverage right now. And I have a condition that warrants it, that needs health insurance coverage, but I don't have it and it's potentially life-threatening.

And this is my girlfriend, Ellen, who came with me.

The President. And you've now been seeing who?

Ms. Rosen. No, I'm not. I can't get treatment. I can't even find out what the possibilities are because I have no health coverage. And I just can't afford it.

Anita Lampert. My name is Anita Lampert. This is my husband, Steven, and my son, Cameron, who's getting very restless. My husband is self-employed. And so I wrote a letter discussing the problems of a self-employed individual, like probably a lot of you, photographers, freelance artists, plumbers, architects, anybody who's self-employed, and the problem with rates being so high. If you don't work for a big corporation, it's very hard to get insurance at affordable rates. And when you have a child that comes into your life, health insurance is very, very important.

The President. They might not be organized, but there are tens of millions of them. And we've already received—Hillary and I have received a million letters. We're just trying to give voice to them.

So in addition to all the economic arguments and all the substantive arguments I made in there in the speech, the real compelling case for health care reform is with these folks here.

Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 2:10 p.m. in the Mercury Ballroom at the New York Hilton. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Lawton Chiles of Florida. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks to the Community in Warwick, Rhode Island

May 9, 1994

The President. Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Pell, Congressman Reed, Governor Sundlun. And thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for such a wonderful welcome. It's good to be back in Rhode Island and to see so many of you here.

Governor Sundlun thanked me for our quick approval of Rhode Island's plan to extend health care to pregnant women and to young children. I thank him and the people of Rhode Island for putting this plan together.

Our administration has granted more initiatives for more States than any in history, but few as good as the one from Rhode Island to try to help the health care of your little children. And I congratulate you on that.

I also want to say a special word of thanks to Senator Pell for his leadership of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and his work with me on some of the most difficult issues of our time. In the last year, we have succeeded in opening up the United States in trade areas, investment areas, in ways that were literally not even thought of just a little while ago.

We also have continued our work to make the world safer. When I became President there were four countries in the former Soviet Union with nuclear weapons. Now three have agreed to give them up and are giving them up. And the nuclear arsenal in Russia is no longer pointed at the United States, nor are our missiles pointed at them. I thank Senator Pell for his support of that.

Finally, I want to thank your Congressman for his leadership in the Goals 2000 legislation that I signed a few weeks ago, which establishes national standards for our public schools and supports grassroots reforms to achieve those standards for the first time in American history, and for his courage in leading the United States House of Representatives to vote to ban the 19 serious assault weapons that are used for killing people on our streets.

I want to thank your Lieutenant Governor, your State treasurer, your attorney general, the State democratic chairman, and the Mayor of Providence, Lincoln Chafee, all of them for being here today. What?

Gov. Bruce Sundlun. The mayor of Warwick.

The President. The mayor of Warwick—I'm sorry.

Governor Sundlun. He's John Chafee's son.

The President. Yes, the Governor says he's John Chafee's son, I know that. And I want to thank John Chafee for having a health care bill that covers all Americans. I'm going to work with them, and we're going