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Note: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 15.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Health Care Liability Reform and Quality of Care Improvement Act of 1991

May 15, 1991

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to submit for your consideration and enactment the "Health Care Liability Reform and Quality of Care Improvement Act of 1991."

This legislative proposal would assist in stemming the rising costs of health care caused by medical professional liability. During recent years, the costs of defensive medical practice and of litigation related to health care disputes have skyrocketed. As a result, the access to quality care for significant portions of the population has been threatened.

The bill would encourage States to adopt within 3 years quality assurance measures, tort reforms, and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. A pool of funds would be available to States and hospitals in those States that implement these reforms. The quality assurance measures require effective

actions to improve quality and reduce the incidence of negligence. The tort reforms would include: (1) a reasonable cap on non-economic damages; (2) the elimination of joint and several liability for those damages; (3) prohibiting double recoveries by plaintiffs; and (4) permitting health care providers to pay damages for future costs periodically rather than in a lump sum. Most of these provisions would be made specifically applicable to actions arising under the Federal Tort Claims Act.

I urge the prompt and favorable consideration of this proposal, which would complement initiatives the Administration will undertake concerned with malpractice and quality of care.

GEORGE BUSH

The White House,
May 15, 1991.

Remarks on the Administration's Domestic Agenda

May 15, 1991

Let me just say a few words. And I, first of all, thank you—thank the leader, Bob Dole, and Don Nickles and everybody for this hospitality. We've got a big and good domestic agenda. I just was up here to get your views, but to urge your support for Fast Track, which is overseas, but it's also domestic because I am convinced that it can create jobs in this country, and I think it's going to be good for the economy of the United States.

I was talking to Senator Thurmond about the crime bill. I am very interested in getting a comprehensive crime package through, and I hope that, with your help, we can do it. I realize the odds are a little

difficult, but we want to get that done.

I wanted to mention the veto strategy that Bob Dole and Al Simpson and so many of you have been active in. And it is very important because when we're in a minority, the only way we're going to get something done is to beat down the bad idea before they give us a shot at a good idea. Last year, we were very successful, thanks to the work of everybody around this table. And I just would urge your continued cooperation with the leadership.

Sometimes I know it's easy. Sometimes you can't join us, but for the most part, we've been very good about it, and I just urge your strong support for this veto strat-

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egy. It's the only way we can get decent Republican ideas—and if we don't do it—kind of disarray and all the chipping away on the Democrat ideas and joining up on something that we know in our hearts isn't good. So, I would strongly urge your support for that.

I know we're moving on transportation and energy. I know Chairman Wallop is working here—Malcolm's working with us on that. These are all very important. I'm leaving out some.

I would make a pitch for our education strategy, America 2000. Actually, that is being received very, very well across the country. And the Governors, regardless of party, are extraordinarily supportive. I think at the grassroots level, people are beginning to understand that we're not just trying to add more money to a program in Washington, but we've got to revolutionize these schools—create brand-new schools. It's an exciting prospect, and I urge your strong support.

Later, we'll have a chance to visit a little bit on what's happening overseas. But I just wanted to click off these domestic items because they are vital. I'm sick and tired of people saying we don't have a domestic agenda, because they've got their eyes closed and they don't want to hear—because we've got a good one. And with your support, we can make a change come to pass. We had a good record last year. The ADA, the crime bill, and child care and other things. And so we can do it this year. We've got to stay together as a team to get the job done.

But thank you all very, very much.

Note: The President spoke at 12:45 p.m. in Room S-207 at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Senators Bob Dole, Don Nickles, Strom Thurmond, Alan K. Simpson, and Malcolm Wallop. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Question-and-Answer Session With Reporters

May 15, 1991

President's Health

Q. How are you feeling?

The President. Fine. Very good report on the health today. And today's really, literally—and I'm not just saying this—the best I've felt since this onset of all this problem.

Q. You're not tired?

The President. Have been, but today I'm not. Yesterday I was dead tired. But they've got a report back now that I think the doctors will comment on later, but it was very good on getting this thyroid in balance. So, for some reason, I'm itching to get back into action here outside, get some—

Q. Miss your jogging?

The President. I miss my exercise. I really do. It's the longest I've been in my life, I think.

Legislative Agenda

But let me just say—you expressed an interest in what we were doing at the Sen-

ate. I was up there making a strong pitch for Fast Track. I feel that the Republican side and many of the Democrats are going to be very supportive in the Senate on Fast Track. It's important to world trade. It's important to the United States economy; that's the point I made.

It's not going to cost us jobs; it will create jobs. And of course, if the United States bugs out of participation in these—in the GATT round, the European—the GATT round—I mean the GATT round generally, and then working with the EC, why, we're in trouble. And I don't want to see us do that. I want us to have full negotiating authority. And we will not bring back to the Congress a deal that they cannot enthusiastically support. There's no purpose in that. We know the parameters within which we have to operate.

I also made a strong pitch for our crime package. I want a comprehensive crime bill.