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Remarks to Health Security Express Participants in Independence, Missouri

July 30, 1994

Thank you, Governor Carnahan. Thank you, Mr. Vice President and Tipper and Hillary. And ladies and gentlemen, thank you all for coming. And let me especially thank those two fine women, mother and daughter, that stood up here and spoke for the nearly 40 million Americans who deserve health care.

I have to tell you, a lot of things have been said here today; maybe everything that needs to be said has been said. But I would like to offer one mildly dissenting view. I believe that most of the people here who disagree with me today about national health reform do admire Harry Truman. They probably think he ought to be on Mount Rushmore. And it must be surprising to them to know that they had the same arguments that are being made against us made against him 50 years ago. That is always the case when you try to change things and why it's so important to use the Presidency to fight to help the ordinary American to live a better life.

You've already heard it. You've heard it in what the other people have said. Harry Truman had to say, "No, this is not socialized medicine, this is private insurance. No, this is not a Government takeover, we're preserving the choice and the private medical system. No, we're not going to waste more money covering everybody, we'll actually save money." And what did they say? "Harry Truman's a radical liberal. He's for socialized medicine. He's for big Government. He's going to take this country down."

Well, the truth is Harry Truman had Independence, Missouri, values. He had this old-fashioned notion that we value work and family and faith. And people who work hard and play by the rules ought to help one another when they need it, ought to join together to help themselves and to help their children have a better life.

And that is really what is at stake here. All this screaming and yelling, what's really hurting America today is that we're shouting too much and listening too little and speaking in a respectful tone too little.

Two years ago, on Labor Day when we all came here to kick off our general election campaign, what a wet day it was. Do you remember how wet it was? And we stood here in the rain because we believed we were on a mission to restore the American dream. We were tired of the screaming, yelling, anti-Government crowd that told us one thing and did another, that exploded the deficit, reduced investment in the American people, drove our economy into the ground. We were tired of seeing our country come apart and be divided by this rhetoric of hatred and division when we need to be coming together, to pull together for the 21st century. And we knew that at the end of the cold war we had a great test before us: Would we move into the next century with confidence, hope, united, so that we can compete and win and every one of our children can live up to the fullest of their God-given abilities, or would we give in to the same old dark fears and divisions that have been dredged up over and over and over again in this country's history?

My fellow Americans, that is the real truth of what your President, Harry Truman, had to face. At the end of World War II, when he was the victor in the war, 80 percent of the people thought he was just great. But then a new world had to be created. And the question was would the President just tell people what they wanted to hear, or would he set about creating that new world?

And what did we get: the GI bill, a way to educate our families, a way to build houses, a way to build the middle class, bringing down the deficit, stabilizing the economy; rebuilding Europe with the Marshall plan; rebuilding Japan; standing up against Soviet expansionism so we could eventually win the cold war. That's what he did. And every step along the way the American people were subject to the most vicious and brutal attacks. Why? Because when people leave one era, when everybody can look at the future through the same set of glasses and they have to pick up another set of glasses to figure out how to understand things, we are always vulnerable.

You think about your own life. Every time you've been asked to change you may have a mixture of hope and fear. And the real test

every time is are your fears going to overtake you, and are you going to give in? Or are you going to live by your hopes and your courage and charge forward and grow and become better? That is the test for the United States today.

This health care fight is far from the first one in which we have been engaged. When I became President, I told the American people I was tired of hearing people say they were conservative and they hated Government and they didn't like the deficit, and presiding over the biggest deficits in history, and I would do something about it. And we passed, against the solid opposition of every member of the other party in the United States Congress, an economic program. And what did it do? Two hundred fifty-five billion dollars worth of spending cuts; tax cuts for 15 million working Americans, including 295,000 Missouri families; a tax increase for the wealthiest 1.5 percent of our people; a reduction in the Federal work force, something the conservatives say they want, a reduction in the Federal work force of 250,000. And what did we produce? Three years of deficit reduction for the first time since Harry Truman was the President of the United States and 3.8 million new jobs, more than in the previous 4 years put together by far and a 1.5-percent drop in the unemployment rate and the largest number of new business starts since World War II. They said we would wreck the economy. Instead we brought it back, because we wouldn't give in to this hatred and rhetoric of division and destruction, and we moved forward.

And then we moved on to try to make sure all of you could compete and win in this global economy, expanding trade against opposition, providing for lifetime training, more for Head Start, world-class standards for our public schools for the first time, apprenticeship programs for our young people who do not go to 4-year colleges but need more training and a reduction in interest rates and better repayment terms for student loans, so that 20 million Americans are immediately eligible for lower interest on their student loans.

My fellow Americans, this is not about hot air and hot signs. This is about what we talked about here in the rain, what Al Gore and I wrote about in "Putting People First," and most of all, it's about what counts in your life as you move forward with your families and your hopes. And we are going to continue doing that.

Just look at the last week in America. What a great week America had. Harry Truman recognized the State of Israel. Now, with our strong help, Israel and Jordan have agreed to end the state of war between them and to work for peace and to make us more secure.

Harry Truman set up a system that enabled us to win the cold war. Now, after the cold war, after much hard work by the United States, Russia has announced that by the end of August, for the first time since Harry Truman was President, there will be no Russian soldiers in Central and Eastern Europe, making the world more secure.

After 6 years of tough talk and anticrime rhetoric by previous administrations, at long last, at long last, this week the House and the Senate agreed to send the toughest, smartest crime bill in the history of the United States to a vote on the floor of the United States Congress this coming week.

And as has been said, your majority leader, Dick Gephardt, and the Speaker of the House have, for the first time in American history, voted out a bill to the floor of the Congress that would provide for affordable health care for all of the American people. It has been a good week for the United States.

But the only way we can go forward is if we go beyond the slogans to the facts, go beyond all the posturing to the people. Look at this crime bill, folks. Children are 5 times more likely to be the victims of violent crime. Violent crime has gone up by 300 percent in the last 30 years, the police forces by only 10 percent. This crime bill will add 100,000 police to our streets. It will make "three strikes and you're out" the law of the land. It will take the assault weapons out of the hands of the gangs that make them better armed than the police forces. It will make handgun possession and ownership by juveniles illegal unless they're under the supervision of an adult. It will make our schools safer. And it ought to pass next week, not because of all the rhetoric against it but because our families deserve a better and a safer and a more secure future.

But if we had to wait 6 long years for a crime bill, isn't 60 years way too long to wait for all the American people to have health care security? That's how long we've been waiting. President Roosevelt wanted it. President Truman proposed it three times. Seven Presidents of both parties have tried to achieve it.

Let me ask you something, and I want you to listen to this, it's so ironic. What is the real big fight here? The big fight is whether employers and employees should be asked to purchase private health insurance and whether the Government saying to the American people, "You must purchase private health insurance" is either socialized medicine, somehow unethical, or bad for the economy. That's what all this boils down to, whether it would be better to keep on doing what we're doing.

Well, let me ask you to consider this. Number one, in 1971, President Richard Nixon and the ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee today, the Republican Senator from Oregon, Bob Packwood, proposed that all employers pay for half of the health insurance costs of all their employees and that we do it. If it was such a hot idea in 1971, why are the members of the other party running against it today as if it had the plague? It was a good idea then, and it's a good idea today.

As you know, I just returned from Germany where I saw the flags of the Berlin Brigade cased because they're coming home, having won the cold war. And I met with hundreds and hundreds of our armed services families. All of them have health care in the military. And do you know, the only thing they wanted to talk to me about was health care. "Mr. President," they said, "when we come home to serve our country out of uniform, we want to know that our children are going to be covered by medical insurance. I hope you can pass health care this year."

It would be different, my fellow Americans, if we didn't have personal experience. Look at the State of Hawaii. In Hawaii, everything is more expensive than it is here on the American mainland, except one thing, health care. Because for 20 years in Hawaii, employers and employees have been required to purchase health insurance so that everybody is covered. And guess what? Small business insurance premiums are 30 percent lower, $400 a year lower for small business people in Hawaii than they are in the United States on the average. We know this works; why are we running away from it? Why don't we run toward it and embrace it and take care of people like that fine young woman that spoke to you here today?

And what happens when we try these half measures? Insurance rates go up, and coverages goes down. Do you know that one of the things I just wish—it's not much I wish for from those who shout and scream, instead of talk and listen and exchange, but I do wish they had some burden to prove that what they're for works.

This is the only country in the world with an advanced economy where we're going backward in health care. Ten years ago, 88 percent of our people were covered. Today, 83 percent of our people are covered. Five years ago there were 5 million Americans who had health insurance then who don't have it today. Five million Americans have lost their health insurance for good, just in the last 5 years, and over 80 percent of them are middle class working people. This is a broken system, and we ought to fix it without delay.

Folks, 60 years ago this fight started. Fifty years ago Truman tried it three times and failed. Twenty-nine years ago, halfway between the beginning and now, President Johnson came to this city to sign Medicare into law and to give Harry and Bess Truman Medicare cards one and two. I'll bet there are a lot of people in this audience whose parents have been helped by Medicare. I bet there are a lot of people in this audience whose family budgets would have been severely strained if it hadn't been for Medicare.

If you have ever dealt with Medicare, you know that it's the furthest thing in the world from socialized medicine. Senior citizens pick their doctors, and the doctors make the decision. And yet, the arguments we're hearing today against this plan are the same arguments the same crowd made against Medicare 29 years ago, just like they did against Harry Truman 50 years ago and F.D.R. 60 years ago.

Let's do better. Let's finish Harry Truman's fight. We're halfway home, and we can go all the way. And let me say this. I want to be as good as my word to say we should talk about people, not slogans. In this beloved State of yours there are 700,000 Missourians without health care. There are 175,000 children without health care. But there are millions who could lose their health care. They're an injury, a sickness, a job loss, a job change away from losing it. I believe we can do better.

I was raised in a home with a mother who was widowed when I was born, who left me with my grandparents to learn to be a nurse. I grew up around hospitals. And I buried my mother earlier this year, after a long and brave battle with cancer for which, thank God, she

received magnificent care because she had health insurance. How can we in good conscience say, when we know every other country's done it, when we know Hawaii has done it and saved money doing it and made people more healthy, how can we say America is not up to it? How can we give in to those who would play to our fear and our fears of the future instead of going forward? Harry Truman would say the buck stops here, the buck stops in Congress and the buck stops with you. Let's push it over the finish line this year.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. outside the Truman Courthouse in Independence Square. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mel Carnahan of Missouri and Health Security Express riders Susan and Rachel Crowthers.

Remarks on Arrival in Cleveland, Ohio
July 30, 1994

Well, first, let me thank all of you for coming out to see Hillary and me. We are delighted to be back in Ohio and glad to be back in Cleveland. And I know I started the baseball season here, so I know you're all really thrilled at how well the Indians are doing. And I—[*inaudible*]—hope there won't be a strike.

[*At this point, the President's microphone failed.*]

Is it working now?

Let me just say a—[*inaudible*]. It keeps dying. Can you hear it now? All right, we'll try again.

As you know, I'm here on behalf of Joel Hyatt's campaign. I'm proud to be here helping him. I also want to say how delighted I am to be here with Congressmen Louis Stokes, Sherrod Brown, and Eric Fingerhut. And I want to make just a couple of points.

When I came here seeking the Presidency, and Ohio gave me the votes first to be nominated and then to be elected, I knew that this was a State which was really the heartland of America, where people were more or less evenly divided by party but where everybody wanted this country to work again for ordinary Americans. And I made some commitments to you, that I'd work on restoring the economy, bringing the American people together instead of dividing us, making the Government work for ordinary people again, and strengthening our communities and our families at the grassroots.

And let me just say that if you look at what has happened, we have worked very hard, often against bitter, bitter opposition, to make this country work. We adopted a plan to reduce the deficit, after the other party had the White House for 12 years and quadrupled the debt, without a single solitary vote from the other side. We passed the biggest deficit reduction plan in history, reduced spending by $255 billion, gave tax cuts to 500,000 working families in the State of Ohio alone, asked 47,000 who can afford it to pay higher taxes to pay the debt down.

Now, what has happened? We, the Democrats alone, without any help unfortunately from Congress from the other party, have reduced the Federal Government to its lowest size since Kennedy was President. We have taken $700 billion off the national debt that would have been there before we came in and passed our economic plan. And what has been the result: 3.8 million new jobs, a 1.5-percent drop in the unemployment rate, the largest number of new businesses in any year since the end of World War II. This plan is working, and we need to keep Sherrod and Eric and Lou in the Congress and elect Joel Hyatt to keep America's economy going.

The other party, they always talked about how tough they were on crime. But for 6 years, under two administrations, there was no crime bill. Last week, the Members of the Senate and the House voted to put on the floor of this Congress this week the toughest anticrime bill in the history of the United States. So those are two reasons that I ran for President on—restoring the economy, helping to deal with crime.

I just want to say one last thing. This last week was a great week for America. The King of Jordan and the Prime Minister of Israel came to Washington to end their war and to pledge