

Nomination for Posts at the Department of the Air Force *February 23, 1994*

The President today announced his intention to nominate Rudy de Leon Under Secretary of the Air Force, the number two civilian position in that branch, and Jeffrey K. Harris Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Space.

“These two individuals have each given almost two decades of substantial service to their coun-

try,” the President said. “I am confident their experience and commitment will serve them well in their important new roles.”

NOTE: Biographies of the nominees were made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Nomination for Ambassador to Finland *February 23, 1994*

The President today announced his intention to nominate Derek Shearer, director of the International and Public Affairs Center at Occidental College in California, as Ambassador to Finland.

“Derek Shearer has a keen intellect and a broad range of foreign policy experience, particularly in international economics,” the Presi-

dent said. “I am pleased that he has accepted this assignment, and I have full confidence that he will represent our country effectively and with honor.”

NOTE: A biography of the nominee was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Remarks on Arrival in Groton, Connecticut *February 24, 1994*

The President. Well, this is hardly the time and place for a speech, but I am delighted to be here with Senator Dodd and Senator Lieberman, Congresswoman Kennelly, and your Congressman, Mr. Gejdenson.

We’re here to talk about health care today and to talk about the future of the people of Connecticut and the future of our country. I also want to say, since I am fairly near Groton, that I think most of you probably know, but yesterday Electric Boat was awarded one of the administration’s technology reinvestment projects for defense conversion, to help to use the defense technologies that were developed in the 1980’s to build the high-tech jobs here at home of the 1990’s. And that will be a help in the future.

Audience member. Sea Wolf!

The President. Well, we hung in there with the Sea Wolf—we did the Sea Wolf. I did that. We reversed that decision. That’s right.

I also want to just say a special word of thanks to all of you for braving this weather and for coming out and for bringing your messages as well as your support. My family and I are very grateful for the friendship that we’ve been given all across this country, especially in the last month as I’ve dealt with the loss of my mother, and we’ve tried to deal with a lot of the challenges facing our country. And when you come out here and stand in this rain after the tough snow you had last night, it’s very moving to me personally. I thank you for that.

I want you to know one other thing. We’ve got a lot of tough challenges still ahead facing our country. We’ve got a lot of hard work to do in the Congress. We are facing the health care issue, the welfare reform issue. We’re going

to try to redo the unemployment system of the country. We have got a lot of big challenges facing this country, but we're going to meet them with your help and your support. And I just want you to tell these folks standing behind me that you do support them when they take the chances and show the courage to

change the country and move it toward the 21st century.

Thank you very much, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. at the Groton/New London Airport.

Exchange With Reporters in Norwich, Connecticut February 24, 1994

Health Care Reform

Q. Are you troubled at all, sir, by word coming off the Hill from the likes of Chairman Pete Stark that the employer mandates and the alliances are in trouble, that he sees little if any chance of them getting through?

The President. No. Mr. Stark has his own plan, and it's sort of a modified single-payer plan. So you wouldn't need the alliances if you did what he wanted, you know, if the Government paid for it all and fixed the price, if you had—just expanded for Medicare. But we see no evidence that beyond that subcommittee that that plan could pass.

But on the other hand, he does want universal coverage, and he wants comprehensive benefits. And so I consider him an ally because he wants that. He's been in this area a long time, and he has a fixed view about how he thinks it should be done. And so anything that's sent to his subcommittee obviously he's going to try to—he's going to see that it reflects his view. We'll just see what happens.

I think—but keep in mind, you've got that committee that a bill would have to come out of, and you've got two other House committees, then you've got two Senate committees. So you've got subcommittees in all the committees, five of them, and then the ultimate committees, and then the battle on the Floor. And this is just beginning.

So I'm not concerned about it because I think what everybody's going to have to do is to ask and answer the questions that at least he's asked and answered: Are you for universal coverage? Do you want reasonable benefits? And all these

people here who have written me these letters make the best case for having a simple, clear comprehensive system that covers everybody and that involves things like prescription medicine. And I know you've been briefed on the letters they wrote me and how the system's affected them. But I consider, therefore, even though Pete Stark has a totally different view about how it ought to be done than I do, what he wants to do is what I want to do.

So I'm not troubled by that. We'll just have to see what comes out of that subcommittee, what comes out of the Ways and Means Committee as a whole, and where we go. I just think that the main issue now is going to be getting all the Members of Congress to sit down and ask and answer in a very calm and clear-headed way these hard questions that relate to making sure everybody has guaranteed private insurance, having the benefits be comprehensive to include preventive and primary care and things like this prescription-drug benefit that we're here to talk about. If that happens, then I think we're on the way to victory. We'll work out everything else, but I'm going to have a lot of very good conversations with people in both parties who are interested in this to deal with those big questions. If you can get there, I'm convinced we'll work out the details. I'm not worried.

NOTE: The exchange began at 2 p.m. in Slater Hall at the Norwich Free Academy. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.