

Aug. 2 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1994

Statement on Senate Action on Health Care Reform Legislation

August 2, 1994

The bill unveiled by Senator Mitchell achieves what the American people want, health coverage that can never be taken away. The bill provides health security for hard-working middle class Americans who deserve nothing less. And it places a high priority on covering the Nation's precious resource, our children. I applaud the majority leader and the Members of the Senate who have been working diligently to bring a bill to the floor that works for ordinary Americans.

The Senate bill provides for universal coverage, enables Americans to keep their current insurance and their doctor, maintains quality health care, and provides greater opportunity to keep health coverage affordable. It builds on the current system of shared responsibility which we already know works.

We have made tremendous progress. The Senate and House are poised to vote for legislation that covers every American for the first

time in our Nation's history. We have come this far, and we must not turn back now. If Congress fails to achieve universal coverage, if hard-working middle class Americans are left out in the cold, and if costs are not controlled, that's simply unacceptable.

The House and Senate will soon begin this debate, a debate that will engage every American family concerned about their health security. While differences in the House and Senate bills will be worked out as the legislative process moves forward, achieving universal coverage remains the critical goal. During the course of this historic floor debate, there will be those who say that reaching universal coverage is not necessary. To those people I say: Let the debate begin. Those of us who are fighting for universal coverage are fighting for middle class Americans. This is a debate that we must win and that we will win.

Statement on the Resignation of Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of Media Affairs Jeff Eller

August 2, 1994

From the earliest days of my campaign for President through our first year and a half in the White House, Jeff has served with dedication and uncompromising loyalty. He played a vital role in redefining the technological means

used to communicate my policies and programs, and I will miss his service and counsel.

NOTE: This statement was included in a statement by the Press Secretary announcing that Mr. Eller would be leaving the administration in September.

Appointment of Interim National AIDS Policy Coordinator

August 2, 1994

The President today appointed Patricia S. Fleming to serve as interim National AIDS Policy Coordinator.

Ms. Fleming, currently special assistant to Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala, will serve until a permanent coordinator takes office.

"This administration has made significant strides in the fight against this terrible epidemic. We've increased our budgets for AIDS research, treatment, and prevention and have fought hard to provide health insurance for all Americans, regardless of preexisting conditions. Patsy

Fleming will make sure we don't lose our momentum," said the President.

NOTE: This item was part of a statement by the Press Secretary announcing the appointment.

Remarks to Health Security Express Participants August 3, 1994

The President. My fellow Americans, Congress has to decide whether it's going to listen to the insurance companies or to Jan Cox's last wish.

We all know what the problem is here. You've just ridden a bus across the country, seeing real people who are just working hard, making the best they can of their lives, wanting a decent break. Those of you who have had these kinds of personal experiences that Daniel and Carolyn and John talked about can't figure out why we spend more than anybody else on health care, cover fewer people than any other country, and get poorer health results. It is because organized, intense, discrete minority interests are doing very well on a system that costs more than any other country's and covers fewer people. And every time you try to change it, they say, well, the world will come to an end.

Well, like Hillary said, we ran for this job, along with Vice President and Mrs. Gore, because maybe we could be the home office of the "American association of ordinary citizens." That's what we wanted to do. And every time we try to make a change, that's what they said.

We showed up here; the deficit was going up, and the economy was going down. And I put together a plan, and I urged the people on the other side to work with me. And they said, "No, if we vote for this, the sky will fall, the economy will collapse. And so we'll all vote against it and call it a big tax increase."

But the truth is the plan cut spending, raised taxes on the richest 1½ percent of Americans, gave 15 million working people a tax cut; thanks to the Secretary of Education, gave 20 million Americans an opportunity to refinance their college loans at a lower interest rate. And, lo and behold, it produced a drop in unemployment and 3.8 million new jobs, and the sky didn't fall. Now the deficit's going down, and the economy's coming up. But it's hard to overcome these organized, intense interests.

We had a different sort of fight over the big trade battle last year over on NAFTA. They said, "If you do this, the economy will collapse." But lo and behold, the Congress, this time with a bipartisan effort, passed NAFTA, and we're exporting 5 times as many cars to Mexico as we were last year. They're our biggest, most growing market.

Change is hard up here, because even though most Members of Congress were once just like you, when they get up here they're a long way from home, and they know that you and the President are presented to the folks back home partly through the rhetoric and the money spent by organized, intense minority interests.

And somehow, some way, this fight has got to be about Daniel Lumley and Carolyn Mosley and John and Jan Cox. That's what it's got to be about. It's got to be about my friend Justin Dart, sitting back there, and all the Americans with disabilities who could be in the work force, making money, paying taxes, contributing to our future, if they could just get health insurance while they're in the work force; all the nurses who hired on to help people get well and instead spend all their time calling insurance companies to try to figure out if this or that procedure can be done by the doctor in the first place. Goodness only knows how many people we employ in this country that would be working more productively in any other country. We have to put hundreds of thousands of people to work every day to figure out who's not covered or what's not covered in an insurance policy. There's not anybody else in the world spending their time and spinning their wheels, putting people to work asking them to spend their entire working life reading the fine print of insurance policies to see what is not covered. Can you imagine a more unsatisfying thing to do with your life?

Lee Brown, our drug policy leader, do you know why he's here today? Because if we could pass health insurance for all Americans, it would