

We also passed in 1993 and 1994, with only a handful of votes from the other side, the family and medical leave bill, the Brady bill, the crime bill, which is putting 100,000 police on our streets. We've now had the biggest drop in crime, for the last 5 years, we've seen in a very long time and last year the biggest drop in violent crime in over 35 years, thanks to the support I received from Democrats.

Then in 1995 and '96, when our friends in the Republican Party won the majority, if it had not been for the staunch, strong, steely determination of the Members of our party in the House of Representatives and in the Senate, we would not have been able to stand against the tide of the Contract With America. They made it possible. My veto pen was not worth a flip without their support, and don't ever forget it. They deserve every bit as much support.

Now, in 1997, we are actually on the verge of getting a budget agreement which includes not only a balanced budget and \$900 billion worth of savings and 10 years of life on the Medicare Trust Fund but, in this Congress, the biggest increase in child health since 1965, the biggest increase in aid to education since 1965,

the biggest increase in aid to help people go to college since the GI bill 50 years ago. Why? Because the Democrats have stood in there with us, and they know that the President's veto pen is good, so we can work together to do things that are right for America.

Now, if we balance the budget, if crime is coming down, if the welfare rolls are dropping, if our foreign policy is strong and our defense policy is strong—if you look ahead to the 21st century, what do we have to do? We have to deal with the health care problems of American children; we have to deal with the continuing crisis in our cities; we have to make our education the best in the world; we have to prove we can grow the economy while we preserve and improve the environment. Who should be doing that? The Democratic Party of the 21st century, the Democratic Party that you are going to help to elect.

Thank you, and God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:05 p.m. at the Mayflower Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Representative Martin Frost, chairman, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

Remarks on the Childhood Immunization Initiative

July 23, 1997

Thank you very much. Thank you, Dr. Guerra. Senator Kennedy, Senator and Mrs. Bumpers, Secretary Shalala; to all the childhood immunization advocates, the State and local officials, all of you who have worked in this garden for so long, we welcome you here.

Hillary and I were the first—part of the first generation of Americans to receive the polio vaccine. Some of you, perhaps, are in our age group, and you were also. I remember when I got the polio vaccine. I remember being a child and having seen the pictures of all the children who were afflicted with polio. And I remember being very conscious that some enormous burden was being lifted off of my life, that I was being given a chance that people just a little older than me didn't have. And it made me grateful in an incredibly personal way for immunizations, I think in a way that nothing else ever could have, although, to be sure, my

mother saw that I got all my other shots, and I screamed and squalled with the best of children. But I was old enough to know what I was doing when I got my first polio vaccine.

And I'll never forget—I think Betty Bumpers was the first person who ever talked to me about this whole immunization issue, and I just never could figure out what the problem was. To be honest, I didn't understand—even 20 years later, I'm not sure I fully understand why it has been as hard as it has been. But I now know what all the elements of this endeavor have been, and I cannot thank those of you who have labored as long as you have to make this day come to pass.

The American people will never know that countless number of people who have harbored the dream that every child could be immunized, have labored to break down all the barriers, have struggled against all the problems so that

we could come here today and say that the new statistics released by the Centers for Disease Control tell us that more than 90 percent of our 2-year-olds have actually received the critical doses of routinely recommended vaccines. But you know what it means, and America is in your debt, and we thank you.

Now record numbers of our children, our youngest and most vulnerable children, are actually safe from potentially deadly diseases, such as diphtheria, tetanus, measles, polio, and meningitis. We set a goal, and we're meeting it. And all of you who have been part of it deserve a lot of the credit. I want to join what Hillary said and again thank Dale and Betty Bumpers for what they've done and for their personal inspiration to us. And I thank you, Dr. David Satcher, for all you've done as head of CDC, for your personal inspiration to so many.

Today, we have to look ahead to see what challenges are left for our children and their health. Almost a million children under the age of 2 are missing one or more of their recommended shots still. Too many children across America continue to fall ill with diseases that a simple immunization could have prevented. We have to make sure that every child now is safe from every vaccine-preventable disease. We're taking two steps to help close the gap.

As parents move from place to place, they often leave their children's immunization records behind. Their new doctors often cannot get access to these records. So I'm directing Secretary Shalala to start working with the States on an integrated immunization registry system. That's the kind of thing most people can't remember, but it may have something to do with whether their children live or die. And we have to do it and do it right.

We're also requiring that all children in federally subsidized child care centers be immunized. Since so many of our youngest children spend at least part of their days in child care outside the home, this, too, can be an important step in our efforts to reach some of the children still falling through the cracks.

The progress we've made in immunization is one of our proudest achievements, and we have the opportunity this summer and fall to take even bolder steps. But let us remember, we have to finish this job. We are celebrating a milestone today, but we have not completed the job. Let me also say that we are on the verge, as Hillary said, of enacting the single largest

investment in health care for children since Medicaid was passed in 1965. Today, 10 million of our children have no health insurance.

The balanced budget agreement that we reached with the leaders of Congress and that passed both Houses with large majorities takes dramatic and concrete steps to right this wrong. Originally it included \$16 billion for child health care. Then in the United States Senate, a strong bipartisan majority passed a 20-cent-per-pack increase in the cigarette tax to add \$8 billion more for a total of \$24 billion. That will clearly give us enough money to cover another 5 million children. That is the right thing to do. I regret that some now believe they should back away from it. It would be a mistake. I intend to fight to keep that money in the budget and fight for our children. And I want to thank Senator Kennedy for his leadership and ask all of you to join us. Thank you. *[Applause]*

Let me say that in some ways, as many of you understand, this is a problem not unlike the immunization problem, because there is more than money involved. That is, what does it mean to provide health care coverage to 5 million more children? How can we make sure that there are 5 million kids who don't have insurance now and not just children that are being dropped from insurance and picked up on a public program? And what kind of insurance should they have anyway?

The Congress has some very challenging, substantive policy issues before it. But I think in the end the goal ought to be pretty simple: We want the children without health insurance to have the kind of health care we want for our own children. This means everything from regular checkups to surgery. Some in Congress want a very watered-down package of benefits at a level well below that now provided by Medicaid and Federal employee health plans. I think that would be a big mistake. It is not necessary, and we shouldn't do it. I am also determined that this money be invested wisely, truly providing new medical insurance and not simply replacing benefits already covered.

Finally, let me say that this 20-cent increase in the cigarette tax not only will provide necessary resources to protect and improve children's health; by raising the price of cigarettes, it will discourage children from starting to smoke in the first place. It is the right thing to do.

This is the opportunity of a generation. It has literally been a generation since we did anything this much for children's health insurance. We mustn't waste it. The balanced budget plan, the tax cut, all these things we have to keep in mind putting our children first. In the days to come, as we try to hammer out the details, a breakthrough for children's health should be at the heart of our objectives.

We also ought to make sure that the tax cut we pass is good for our children. I have proposed a plan that focuses on the needs of families, to help them raise their children and send them to college. It is responsible; it is affordable. We don't want to return to the days when, under the guise of helping people, we gave them endless exploding deficits. Fiscal responsibility helped to produce a strong economy, and fiscal irresponsibility would surely weaken it. We can have the right kind of tax cut plan, but we ought to keep the children in mind there, too.

Finally, let me say that, as I said earlier, one of the things we expect to do that will really help us close the remaining gaps in immunization is to require children in federally subsidized child care centers to be immunized. I'm convinced the next great frontier we have to cross to really, truly enable American families to reconcile the demands that they face in the workplace and the demands they face at home is to make sure we have quality, affordable, available child care for all the American people who need it.

One of the reasons I've supported this children's tax credit and one of the reasons I want it to be given to people of modest means who are working hard out there for salaries of less than \$30,000, is I want to help people pay for the right kind of child care. This is very important.

On October 23d, the First Lady and I will convene the first-ever White House Conference on Child Care, to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the present system in America and to try to find ways to translate that discussion into action to achieve our goal, just as we have achieved this goal today.

Immunization, health care, child care, all these reflect our faith in the potential of every child and honor our obligation to every family. For all the work you have done to help make this remarkable day come to pass, I thank you, your fellow citizens thank you, and I hope someday the American people will truly understand the magnitude of the endeavors that so many of you in this room have undertaken for the next generation of our children.

Thank you all, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:20 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Fernando Guerra, director of health, San Antonio Metropolitan Health District; and Betty Bumpers, wife of Senator Dale Bumpers.

Statement Announcing the White House Conference on Child Care

July 23, 1997

Today the First Lady and I are pleased to announce that on October 23, 1997, we will host the White House Conference on Child Care. The conference, which will take place at the White House, will examine the strengths and weaknesses of child care in America and explore how our Nation can better respond to the needs of working families for affordable, high quality child care.

Over the past decade, the number of American families with working parents has expanded dramatically. Making high quality child care more affordable and accessible is critical to the

strength of our families and to healthy child development and learning. It is also good for the economy and central to a productive American work force.

This Nation can and should do better. Each of us—from businesses to religious leaders to policymakers and elected officials—has a responsibility and an important stake in making sure that children of all ages have the best possible care available to them. From infancy through adolescence, in child care settings and after-school programs, children can learn and thrive with the right care, attention, and education.