

July 16 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

in Washington. We had the same thing happen with the Patients' Bill of Rights; you probably saw that.

We had this crazy idea, we Democrats did, that everybody in a managed care plan in America ought to be able to see a specialist if their doctor said they should see one. Or, if they lived in a big city and they got hurt in an accident, they ought to be able to go to the nearest emergency room, not be driven halfway across town. Or, if their employer changed managed care providers while a woman employee was in the middle of a pregnancy or a man or a woman was in chemotherapy, they ought to be able to keep their doctor until the treatment was over.

And if somebody hurts you with a bad decision, you ought to be able to get redress for it. Now those are rights that I enjoy under the Federal Health Care Plan and the Congress enjoys and every Federal employee enjoys. And the Congress—the Republican majority's own budget office said this would add at most \$2 a month to a managed care premium. In the Federal system, it added less than \$1 a month when I put them in.

Now, I don't know, but I believe in Iowa when you go to the doctor's office, they don't ask you if you're a Republican or a Democrat. [Laughter] And I don't believe when the children come to school here they ask you if you're a Republican or a Democrat. These are things that should unify us. And so I ask you to please, please do what you can to talk to all the members of this congressional delegation; ask them to support us on 100,000 teachers; ask them—it's still not too late to pass the Patients' Bill of Rights that gives the rest of you the protections we have in Congress and the White House and the Federal Government. And ask them to make a part of any tax cut plan a school construction initiative that will build or modernize 6,000 schools.

You think about this young woman who introduced me today. I have seen people like her all across America, marvelous kids in the poorest corners of this country—kids in schools that are 75 years old that haven't been fixed, where the kids walk up the steps and they see broken windows every day, where there are rooms, in some cases whole floors they can't even go on. They deserve better.

How in the world can we say to them, we had the most prosperous time in American history; we had the biggest surplus in history; we dug ourselves out of debt; but all we thought of was ourselves and the next election; we didn't have the time or money or vision to think about you and your future? We are a better country than that. All of us are, without regard to party. Everywhere else but Washington, DC, you would never hear anybody discarding this argument. I implore you, help us to get this done this year. The children of America deserve 21st century schools.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to 1998 Iowa Teacher of the Year Ruth Ann Gaines, who introduced the President; incoming eighth grader Catherine Swoboda; Eric Witherspoon, superintendent, Des Moines Independent Public Schools; Gary L. Eyerly, principal, Amos Hiatt Middle School; Gov. Tom Vilsack, Lt. Gov. Sally Pederson, State Attorney General Tom Miller, Secretary of State Chester J. Culver, State Treasurer Michael L. Fitzgerald, and State Senator Michael Gronstal of Iowa; Representative Leonard L. Boswell's wife, Darlene (Dody); and Senator Tom Harkin's wife, Ruth, former President and Chief Executive Officer, Overseas Private Investment Corporation. The President also referred to the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-127).

Exchange With Reporters in Des Moines

July 16, 1999

Patients' Bill of Rights Legislation

Q. Mr. President, do you have any reaction to Senator Lott's comments—

The President. I can understand why he'd be uncomfortable about what he did. He denied the American people the right to the patient

protections he has. So they feel uncomfortable. But it's not too late; they can still change their position. They ought to think about—it's not a matter of name calling. Their budget office told him it would only cost \$2 a month premium. They've ignored their own budget people; they've now ignored everybody, and they basically signed up with the health insurance companies against all the doctors and all the nurses

and all the patients in America and denied other people what those of us in the Federal Government enjoy. I don't think it's right. But it's not too late to do right.

NOTE: The exchange began at approximately 3 p.m. at Amos Hiatt Middle School. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Statement on House Action on Proposed Legislation To Provide Assistance to African Nations

July 16, 1999

I welcome and applaud passage today by the House of Representatives of the African growth and opportunity act. This historic initiative will set the foundation for a stronger partnership between the United States and Africa. I urge the Senate to act quickly so that we can strengthen the ties between our Nation and a continent on the verge of a new era of democracy and prosperity.

This legislation offers the opportunity for increased trade and investment between the United States and Africa to the mutual benefit of both. By working with African nations to build their economies, strengthen democratic government, and increase opportunities for all the people of Africa, we will help build strong, capable partners with whom we can work to counter the growing threats of terrorism, crime, environmental degradation, and disease.

Statement on the Death of Congressman George E. Brown, Jr.

July 16, 1999

I was greatly saddened to learn of the death of Congressman George Brown. When he last visited the White House, I noted that he was affectionately known as Mr. Science. His legacy of service and lifetime of contributions helped sustain American leadership across the frontiers of scientific knowledge. George Brown's support for science was drawn from his deep belief that science and technology could help achieve a

peaceful world and a just society. For almost 40 years, from his earliest days fighting racial inequality, George Brown challenged us to build a better world. Our Nation has lost a good man and an irreplaceable voice for science and justice.

Hillary and I extend our deepest condolences to his wife, Marta, and to his family.