

Feb. 7 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

that protects all Americans, does not override the patient protections already adopted by states, and avoids costly litigation.

I look forward to working with you and all Members of Congress to enact these principles into law as soon as possible. I also look forward to working with you to provide access to health care for the mil-

lions of Americans without health insurance.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Trent Lott, Senate majority leader.

Letter to Congressional Minority Leaders on the Patients' Bill of Rights *February 7, 2001*

Dear Leader:

I am writing to discuss our shared goal of passing a strong Patients' Bill of Rights. Over the last two weeks my staff and I have met with Members of Congress from both parties, and I believe that we have an opportunity to work together to enact legislation this year to address this important issue. I am writing to ask for your support, and for the support of all Members of Congress, for a bipartisan Patients' Bill of Rights to provide all Americans with protections in managed care.

As Governor of Texas, I worked with Democrats and Republicans to enact some of the strongest patient protection laws in this country. My goal now in seeking Federal legislation is simple: I want to ensure that all patients receive needed medical care and that doctors are allowed to make medical decisions.

To achieve these goals, patients should have the right to an independent medical review of a health plan's decision to deny care. This review should be conducted by medical experts outside the health plan and must be binding on the health plan. I also believe that, following an independent medical review of a health plan's decision to deny care, patients who have been wrongly denied medical care should be allowed to hold their health plans liable in Federal court.

I cannot support a plan, however, that encourages unnecessary or frivolous litigation. Expensive litigation, and the resulting rise in health care costs, would only make it more difficult for Americans to afford health care coverage in the first place. I believe it is possible to provide patients a meaningful remedy when they have been wrongly denied care, without causing other Americans to lose coverage. A responsible remedy for patients should protect employers from the high costs of being subject to multiple causes of action in multiple venues and should provide a reasonable cap on damages.

I have enclosed the principles by which I will gauge any piece of Federal legislation. I do not believe that any bill currently before the Congress meets all of these principles. However, I applaud the efforts of Members on both sides of the aisle who have stepped forward to address this issue. I believe we can work together to reach bipartisan agreement this year on a strong Patients' Bill of Rights that protects all Americans, does not override the patient protections already adopted by States, and avoids costly litigation.

I look forward to working with you and all Members of Congress to enact these principles into law as soon as possible. I also look forward to working with you to

provide access to health care for the millions of Americans without health insurance.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Thomas A. Daschle, Senate minority leader, and Richard A. Gephardt, House minority leader.

Remarks on Transmitting the Tax Relief Plan to the Congress *February 8, 2001*

Thank you very much for that warm welcome. It's good to see so many friends here in the Rose Garden. This is our first event in this beautiful spot, and it's appropriate we talk about policy that will affect people's lives in a positive way in such a beautiful, beautiful part of our national—really, our National Park System, I guess, as you'd want to call it.

This is the land of economic miracles, and we are experiencing one here in our country. Latino businesses are growing faster than the Government can count. Back in 1997 there were 1.4 million Latino-owned businesses. Since then, the number has been growing by an estimated 25 percent. No one is entirely sure of the total. Your success has left all statistics behind, and America is better off for it.

The businesses you have built prove the continuing power of the American ideal, a promise of advancement to men and women of every background. This country appreciates you. We appreciate your vision, your hard work. And I congratulate you for your success.

To succeed, Latino-owned businesses need the same things all businesses need: moderate regulation, a sensible legal system, and a growing economy. For several months, however, our economic growth has been in doubt. And now, it may be in danger.

Americans are hearing, and some feeling, the economic slowdown. Americans hear about the news—many are beginning to actually feel what it means to be in an eco-

nomie slowdown. Consumer confidence has slumped. Many business leaders are worried. A warning light is flashing on the dashboard of our economy. And we just can't drive on and hope for the best. We must act without delay.

My job is to lead. A President should not wait on events; he must try to shape them. And the warning signs are clear. All of us here in Washington, the President and the Congress, are responsible to confront the danger of an economic slowdown and to blunt its effects.

Today I am sending to Congress my plan to provide relief to all income-tax payers, which I believe will help jump-start the American economy. We must give over-charged taxpayers some of their own money back. We must give low-income families fairer treatment. We must give small businesses a better chance to grow and to hire. For all these reasons, I urge Congress to help me strengthen our economy by lightening the tax load, the tax burden on the American people.

Here's how my tax relief plan will work. We will simplify our Tax Code, reducing today's five brackets to four lower ones: 10 percent, 15 percent, 25 percent, and 33 percent. Families with children will also receive a tax credit of \$1,000 per child. We will end the death tax, reduce the marriage penalty, and expand tax incentives for charitable giving.

My plan is directed toward individuals and small businesses. It offers relief for everyone who pays income taxes, and it keeps