

to further discussions about this—about these two options.

Whichever plan we choose, reforming the Tax Code would have a major impact on American health care. That's what's important for our citizens to understand. There's a better way from expanding the government, and that is to reform the Tax Code. For example, just as tax incentives for homeownership have encouraged more Americans to buy homes through the private housing market, new incentives for health insurance would lead more Americans to buy coverage through the private health insurance market. And that's what we want. That ought to be the goal of this country.

By reforming the Tax Code, it would help more than 100 million people who are now covered by employer-provided insurance reduce their tax bills. Those who now purchase health insurance on their own would save money on their taxes for the first time. And as many as 20 million others who have no health insurance would purchase basic coverage.

While the Federal Government is working to reform the Tax Code, States should address other problems in our health care system. That's precisely what the Secretary is doing, working with our States. States should make reforms to ensure that their citizens have access to basic private health insurance. It's a dual responsibility. If we want a better system, the Federal Govern-

ment has got a responsibility to reform, and so do States. As they do so, they should ensure that help is provided to those who can least afford coverage.

We're at a decisive moment in the debate over health care. The choices we make now will set the direction of medical care in America for years to come. I'm going to continue to work with members of both parties to look past tired, old proposals that make bigger government programs the solution to every problem. I'm going to continue to push for new and innovative ways to help every American afford basic private health insurance. I will continue to put my trust in the good judgment of the American people, and I'll put my trust in the finest system of private medicine in the world.

I want to thank you all for coming. Thanks for your interest. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:18 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. Participating in the discussion were Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael O. Leavitt; John B. Breaux, senior counsel, Patton Boggs; Stuart M. Butler, vice president of domestic and economic policy studies, Heritage Foundation; Len Nichols, director, health policy program, New America Foundation; C. Eugene Steuerle, senior fellow, Urban Institute; Grace-Marie Turner, president, Galen Institute; and Gail Wilensky, senior fellow, Project HOPE.

Remarks at Opening Day of 2007 White House Tee-Ball June 27, 2007

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to opening day right here on the South Lawn of the White House. Jonas Brothers, thank you guys. It's good to see you. Proud you're here. As usual, you did a fantastic job with the national anthem. Just give them a hand.

I'm proud to be here with the commissioner of tee-ball today, two-time Olympic gold medalist, Michele Smith. Thanks for coming, Michele. Proud to be with you.

First, we want to welcome to tee-ball here on the South Lawn the Bobcats from

Allegany County Little League, Cumberland, Maryland. And we want to welcome their mighty opponent from Luray, Virginia, the Red Wings. The commissioner and I wish the girls all the very best. We want to thank the coaches, and, of course, we want to thank the parents for coming. We welcome you here—opening day of tee-ball on the South Lawn.

I do want to thank the Arizona Wildcat national champs for joining us today. Taryne Mowatt, the coach at first base; Taryne, thanks for coming. Congratulations, Caitlin Lowe, the third base coach. We've got bench coaches; we've got the team. We want to wish you all the very best next year. For this would be a three-peat, right? Good luck to you all. Thanks for setting such a fine example.

One reason that we invited the Wildcats to come today to honor these girls softball teams is because it's in the Nation's interest to promote women athletics. We're a big believer in Title IX programs. We think it's good for America that our women are playing sports. And the best way to convince women to play sports is to start early. So these champs are here to encourage these young girls to play hard, play often, and play good. And one day you may be national champs as well. So thanks for coming. We're glad you're here.

I do want to thank Mayor Ralph Dean of Luray. I forgot to welcome you, Mr. Mayor. We're proud you're here. Thanks for coming. We want to thank Girl Scouts of USA for joining us today. Girls, thanks for bearing the colors. We thank you for coming. We're proud you're here. Thanks for being Scouts.

And by the way, we're about to get the first pitch in. And Meredith Cripe is going to give me the ball in a minute. Meredith,

we're really glad you're here. Thanks for coming. It's a big day to be here to put out the first pitch on opening day, and we're glad we selected you.

I do want to thank Hannah Storm, the announcer today. Hannah, thanks for lending your talent, mother of three soon-to-be all-star softball players. We're glad you're here. We want to thank the Little League International staff. Thanks for putting on this event. Thanks for supporting Little League baseball. Thanks for helping our kids understand the blessings of exercise and team sports.

I do want to thank representatives from the YWCA, the Boys and Girls Club of America, and Girls on the Run.

And finally, after this event, the commissioner and I are going to present each of you all a token of our appreciation for you coming, and we're also going to say thanks to Erica Minor, who is the youth volunteer. We like to honor people who serve their neighbors; love a neighbor like they'd like to be loved themselves. And Erica is such a person.

And now, before we begin the game and before you give me the ball, Meredith, we're going to have the Little League Pledge. Are you ready? Ready to go? Here we go.

[At this point, the pledge was recited.]

Play ball.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:16 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers, the Jonas Brothers; Meredith Cripe, member, Chantilly, Virginia, Little League Challenger League; and Hannah Storm, anchor, CBS News "The Early Show."

Statement on the Appointment of Tony Blair as Quartet Representative in the Middle East

June 27, 2007

Earlier today, I spoke with Prime Minister Blair. It has been my pleasure to work with Tony Blair over the last 6½ years. He is not only a friend, but is also a visionary leader who has prepared his country to face challenges and opportunities over the horizon. Tony is a man who stands up for his beliefs and has the courage of his convictions. Because of his steadfast resolve in the war on terror, millions of people around the world now enjoy the great rights of freedom and democracy.

I am pleased that this capable man has agreed to continue his work for peace in the Middle East. I welcome the appointment of Tony Blair as the Quartet rep-

resentative. In his new role, Tony will help Palestinians develop the political and economic institutions they will need for a democratic, sovereign state able to provide for its people and live in peace and security with Israel. I thank him for his willingness to give his time to this goal, which would be a historic step toward peace in the Middle East.

As he leaves the post of Prime Minister and as he undertakes a new role as Quartet representative, the people of the United States of America express our gratitude for his strong friendship and his continued efforts to lay the foundations for freedom in the Middle East.

Remarks on the Nomination of Admiral Michael G. Mullen To Be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and General James E. Cartwright To Be Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

June 28, 2007

The President. Good morning. Thank you all for coming. Mr. Secretary, thank you for joining us. I am sending to the United States Senate my nomination of Admiral Mike Mullen to be America's next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and I'm sending my nomination of General James Cartwright to be the next Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Mike Mullen and Hoss Cartwright are experienced military officers. They're highly qualified for these important positions. I thank them for agreeing to serve their country in these new capacities. We welcome Mike's wife Deborah and sons, John and Michael. Thank you all for coming. Thanks for wearing the uniform. Hoss's wife got stuck on an airplane. *[Laughter]* I'm sure she's going to forgive him—

[laughter]—and hopefully, forgive me. I thank you all for being here and joining on this—joining these good men on this exciting day for them.

America is at war, and we're at war with brutal enemies who have attacked our Nation and who would pursue nuclear weapons, who would use their control over oil as economic blackmail, and who intend to launch new attacks on our country. In such times, one of the most important decisions a President makes is the appointment of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Chairman is our Nation's highest-ranking military officer. He is the principal military adviser to the President, to the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Council, and the Homeland Security Council. He is responsible for ensuring that our