

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 will 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 include drug treatment for all Americans. Now, he's a policeman; he spent all of his life trying to lower crime and fight criminals, be tough on law and order. But he learned as a police officer that there are a lot of people in trouble with drug and alcohol abuse, and they need treatment. And we'd save billions and billions of dollars.

And it's not like we don't know what to do. Twenty years ago, Hawaii said, everybody here is going to get insurance; we're going to have employers and employees cover their health insurance. And if you've never been to Hawaii—I hope you get to go someday; it's a wonderful place—but everything there

is more expensive than any place else because it's way out on an island somewhere, everything except health care, where the premiums for small business are 30 percent below the national average because everybody pays and no one runs away and everybody is covered.

And you ought to be taken care of, whether you're a young man riding a motorcycle in the prime of your life or a young woman giving yourself to nursing or a man following a religious mission to work at a Christian radio station or any other thing. It just ought to be that way.

We have a consensus in this country on universal health care. What we do not have is a consensus among people elected to represent the American people on making the tough decisions necessary to get universal health care.

There are lots of things like that in life. A bunch of us, including me, would like to be thinner, but we don't diet. *[Laughter]* A lot of people would like to be stronger, but they don't lift weights.

In the end, it comes down, when you've got something everybody wants to do but is not easy to do, the people that hired on have to make the decisions. And the Members of the United States Congress hired on, just like I did. We didn't say, "Vote for me in a representative form of government, and I will make all the necessary decisions to solve the problems of the country except those that are difficult, controversial, and make people mad." That was not the deal.

And you need to hang around this town, and you need to tell your stories. Because the questions that I get asked are, "Well, what about this detail or that bill, or who is up, or who is down?" I say I have answered my question. My question is, am I for you or not? Answer: Yes. And secondly, second question, did I offer a plan to solve your problem? The answer: Yes. Third question, was I willing to meet people who had different ideas or better ideas more than half-way? The answer is yes.

These bills provide for longer phase-in. They give less orders, fewer orders. And they give more options to smaller business; they give a better financial break to small business. They are less bureaucratic. We have

listened to the American people, and Congress has presented bills to do that. They've bent over backwards to recognize that the American people want options, and they don't like to be told to do anything. I don't blame them. Nobody likes that. But the conservative thing to do is to ask everybody to carry as much of their own load as they can and then for the rest of us to help.

Those who are opposed to universal coverage say, "We've got a whole class of people we're not going to ask to carry any load at all, and we'll ask everybody who's already doing their part to do even more." I think we have the conservative position, my fellow Americans, the responsible position. Everybody should do what they can, and then we'll help those who need more.

I just want to ask you to remember this: Make this debate about John and Jan Cox, about the story Carolyn Mosley told, about the dreams of the future—teaching our children—that Daniel Lumley has, and about the personal stories that are here in this audience and all across America. Don't let it become part of some rhetoric, hot air, process, conflict, interest group deal. And say a simple word: We have moved; we have reached out to people of different views and different parties. This is not a partisan issue. I don't have any earthly idea what political party these three people are in or who they voted for President, and I do not care. I want them to have health care.

You make the debate about them, and remind the Congress that, just like the President, they signed on to represent ordinary Americans, to make the tough decisions and not to walk away. And this is a decision America has walked away from for 60 years. President Truman, three times, asked the American people to get the Congress to solve this problem, and the Congress said no. President Nixon, 23 years ago, asked the Congress to require employers and employees to split the difference and cover, with private health insurance, all Americans. Now, it's been long enough, folks. I know we're supposed to deliberate up here, but we have now deliberated through three generations. *[Laughter]*

Audience members. Pass it now! Pass it now! Pass it now!

The President. Pass it now, for them and for you.

God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Health Security Express riders Daniel Lumley, Carolyn Mosley, John Cox, and Mr. Cox's late wife, Jan.

The President's News Conference

August 3, 1994

The President. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Tonight I want to speak with you about crime, health care, and the progress of our national economic strategy. As I have said so many times, the central mission of this administration, renewing the American dream, requires us to restore economic growth, rebuild American communities, empower individual citizens to take personal responsibility for their own futures, and make Government work for ordinary citizens again. We are making progress.

Remember, we are about, now, a year from the time when Congress passed our economic recovery plan. I remember then that our opponents said if that plan passed the sky would fall, unemployment would go up, the deficit would explode. Well, they were wrong. Look at the facts. We cut \$255 billion in spending; raised tax rates on only 1.2 percent of the wealthiest Americans; cut taxes for 15 million working families of modest incomes; made 90 percent of our small businesses eligible for a tax cut and 20 million Americans available or eligible to refinance their college loans at lower interest rates. Now the deficit is going down 3 years in a row for the first time since Harry Truman was President. We've got almost 4 million new jobs, very low inflation, a 1½ percent drop in unemployment.

There were other skeptics later who said the sky would fall if we passed the North American Free Trade Agreement. They, too, were wrong. We can see this year that automobile sales, for example, to Mexico are growing at five times the rate of last year, and our trade with Mexico is growing more rapidly than that with any other country. And while I know an awful lot of people are still

hurting, the road ahead looks good. According to Fortune Magazine, for the first time in a decade, all 50 States will expand their private economies next year. Let me say that again. For the first time in a decade, all 50 States will experience economic growth next year.

None of this came without a fight. And now we're involved in two more historic fights. The first is on crime. We have a chance to pass the toughest, smartest crime bill in the history of the United States after 6 years of bickering over it. Let me remind you of what that bill will do. It will put 100,000 police officers on the streets of our communities, a 20 percent increase. It will make "three strikes and you're out" the law of the land. It will ban deadly assault weapons and handgun ownership by minors. It will provide tougher sentences for violent criminals and more prisons to put them in. And we've listened to police, prosecutors, and community leaders who tell us that they need much more for prevention programs, to give our young people something to say yes to, as well as something to say no to.

Believe it or not, there are still special interests here in Washington trying to derail this crime bill. But we are fighting them and the American people will win this fight, too.

Still, the recovery we are building, the communities we are trying to make safer, the individual citizens we're trying to empower to compete and win in the global economy, all of these people are at risk unless and until we reform health care.

Our system still costs too much and covers too few. It is actually going in the wrong direction. In the past 5 years, 5 million more Americans have lost their health insurance, almost all of them working people and their children. We're fighting for health care reform not just for those who don't have health insurance, but for those who do have it and who could lose it because they have to change jobs, because someone in their family gets sick, because they simply have to pay too much for it. They deserve better, and we're fighting to see that they get it.

We want to guarantee private, not Government, insurance for every American. The plan I originally proposed has been changed, and much of it for the better. The proposals