

**Letter to Congressional Leaders on the “Patients’ Bill of Rights Act of 1998”**

March 31, 1998

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am writing to commend you on the Patients’ Bill of Rights Act of 1998 that you are introducing today on behalf of the Democratic Caucuses of both Houses of Congress. This bill represents a critically important step towards enacting a long overdue “Patients’ Bill of Rights” that Americans need to renew their confidence in the nation’s rapidly changing health care system.

States across the nation have already begun to enact reasonable patient protections. In fact, 44 states, including 28 of the 32 states with Republican Governors, have passed at least one of the protections that my Advisory Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality recommended, and that I endorsed last year. However, a patchwork of non-comprehensive state laws cannot provide Americans with adequate patient protections, particularly because state health care laws do not have jurisdiction over more than 100 million Americans. Federal standards are essential to assure that all patients get the protections they need.

You have done a remarkable job bringing a broad-based coalition of Democrats together to move this important issue forward. I would particularly like to commend Senator Kennedy and Representative Dingell for their leadership in developing this legislation.

The Patients’ Bill of Rights Act of 1998 includes important patient protections, such as the right to emergency care wherever and whenever a medical emergency arises; the right to talk freely with doctors and nurses about all the medical options available, not only the cheapest; and the right to an internal and external appeals process that allows patients to address their concerns and grievances. I am particularly pleased that it includes every protection recommended by the Advisory Commission. This bill also improves on other patients’ rights legislation before the Congress because it does not include expensive protections for health care providers that have the potential to increase premiums excessively.

The bill you are introducing today provides a critical step towards developing bipartisan legislation that will pass the Congress. I look forward to working with the Congress to enact a “Patients’ Bill of Rights” Act that I can sign into law this year.

I am confident that, working in a bipartisan fashion, the Congress will produce a bill that achieves the important balance of providing patients the protections they need without undermining health care affordability. We must ensure that whether they have traditional care or managed care, Americans have access to quality care. Thank you again for your strong leadership and commitment to this end.

Sincerely,

**William J. Clinton**

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Senate Minority Leader Thomas A. Daschle and House Minority Leader Richard A. Gephardt. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

**Letter to Chairman Bud Shuster of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on Legislation Proposing a Uniform Standard Blood-Alcohol Level**

March 31, 1998

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On March 28, 1998, I sent a letter to the Leadership addressing my concerns regarding H.R. 2400, the Building Efficient Surface Transportation and Equity Act of 1998. As the House prepares to consider this bill, it is my hope that the Lowey-Canady .08 provision be adopted.

As the crime rate continues to drop nationwide, we still lose an American to drunk driving every thirty minutes—every half hour a family is shattered and a child, parent or neighbor is lost forever. Setting a uniform limit for impaired driving at .08 blood alcohol content will help us crack down on the drunk driving epidemic and put a stop to these needless deaths. In addition, a uniform standard will still allow adults to drink responsibly.

This should not be a partisan issue, but rather an opportunity for the House to act

in a bipartisan fashion to save lives and serve America. I look forward to continuing to work together to make the .08 standard a reality.

Sincerely,

**William J. Clinton**

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

**Message to the Congress Reporting on Appropriations for B-2 Bombers**

*March 31, 1998*

*To the Congress of the United States:*

In accordance with the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 1998, Public Law 105-56 (1997), and section 131 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1998, Public Law 105-85 (1997), I certify to the Congress that no additional B-2 bombers should be procured during this fiscal year.

After considering the recommendations of the Panel to Review Long-Range Air Power and the advice of the Secretary of Defense, I have decided that the \$331 million authorized and appropriated for B-2 bombers in Fiscal Year 1998 will be applied as follows: \$174 million will be applied toward completing the planned Fiscal Year 1998 baseline modification and repair program and \$157 million will be applied toward further upgrades to improve the deployability, survivability, and maintainability of the current B-2 fleet. Using the funds in this manner will ensure successful completion of the baseline modification and repair program and further enhance the operational combat readiness of the B-2 fleet.

The Panel to Review Long-Range Air Power also provided several far-reaching recommendations for fully exploiting the potential of the current B-1, B-2, and B-52 bomber force, and for upgrading and sustaining the bomber force for the longer term. These longer term recommendations warrant careful review as the Department of Defense

prepares its Fiscal Year 2000-2006 Future Years Defense Program.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
March 31, 1998.

**Videotaped Remarks for the Memorial Service in Jonesboro, Arkansas**

*March 29, 1998*

Hillary and I wish we could be with you all as you remember and give thanks for the lives of Natalie Brooks, Paige Ann Herring, Stephanie Johnson, Brittany Varner, and Shannon Wright.

Our prayers have been with their families and with all of you over these last few days. Every one of them made Jonesboro a better place. Every one of them had much to live for and much still to give. For now, you must all be thankful for the cherished memories you have.

Like all of you, I do not understand what dark force could have driven young people to do this terrible thing. As President, I have seen many children killed by political fanatics, but in some ways, this is even harder to grasp. For now, all we can do is to pray for peace and healing for their families and for Jonesboro. And, indeed, we should pray for the families of the two young suspects, for their suffering, too, must be grievous.

Saint Paul reminds us that we all see things in this life through a dark glass, that we only partly understand what is happening to us. But one day, face to face with God, we will see all things, even as He sees us.

For four fine young girls and an outstanding teacher, that day has come. May God bless them, their families, and all of you.

NOTE: These remarks were videotaped in the afternoon on March 28 in Johannesburg, South Africa. They were released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 31 for the memorial service that evening.