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per month). The improvement in the quality of health care that will result from these protections is more than worth the very modest premium increases projected by both Kaiser and CBO.

This report again shows the utter groundlessness of claims that a patients' bill of rights will significantly increase health care costs. With this new information, there is no excuse left for inaction. I therefore call on Congress again to send me legislation that gives Americans the health care protections they need and deserve. I look forward to working with Members on both sides of the aisle to ensure that we pass a strong patients' bill of rights this year.

Statement on House Action on Campaign Finance Reform

April 22, 1998

I am very pleased that the House Republican leadership will heed the call of congressional reformers and allow a vote on campaign finance reform. I strongly support the bipartisan legislation offered by Representatives Christopher Shays and Marty Meehan, which is the best chance in a generation for real reform. Similar legislation already has the support of a majority of Senators, yet it has been blocked by a minority on procedural grounds. Now every Member of the House of Representatives has a responsibility to vote for this measure to ban large soft money contributions, improve disclosure, and restrict backdoor campaign spending. A vote for bipartisan campaign finance reform will be a vote to strengthen our democracy and give ordinary voters a stronger voice.

Memorandum on Citizen Service

April 22, 1998

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Strengthening Our Commitment to Service

Citizen service is one of the most important ways we demonstrate that we care for and are responsible for one another. It is also an American tradition that we meet our challenges as members of a true community, with all of us working together. Thus, citizen service should not just be a temporary pursuit of only a week or a month. The ethic of service must extend throughout a lifetime.

Over the years, great numbers of Federal employees have been generous with their time and talents and have made positive contributions to their local communities, even as they have fulfilled their official responsibilities. At the same time, as the Nation's largest employer, the Federal Government has a responsibility to set an example by helping to make it possible for its employees to dedicate time to serve others.

Therefore, I am today directing Federal departments and agencies to explore additional measures to expand service opportunities for Federal employees. Each department and agency should review its work scheduling practices and make maximum use of existing flexibilities to allow Federal employees to plan and take time off to perform community service as the public business permits. Each department and agency should also inform its employees of the various flexibilities available to them to participate in volunteer activities. The Office of Personnel Management should provide information to departments and agencies in support of this effort. Each department and agency should then report to the Office of Personnel Management within 90 days on the measures taken to implement this memorandum.

William J. Clinton

Remarks at the White House Millennium Lecture with Robert Pinsky, Robert Hass, and Rita Dove

April 22, 1998

[*Moderator Ellen Lovell, Director, White House Millennium Council, welcomed the participants and introduced a short film about the Poet Laureate Consultant Program at the Library of Congress. Following the film, Hillary Clinton discussed the influence that poets and their works have had on American culture and welcomed Poets Laureate Robert Pinsky, Robert Hass, and Rita Dove. Mr. Pinsky, Mr. Hass, and Ms. Dove then*

read selected poems by various American poets and commented on the importance of poetry on America's past and future.]

The President. I don't mean to be heretical, but I was transported by Robert and Robert and Rita. And I was thinking, this really is an historic moment: first, there were the three tenors—[*laughter*]—then there were three sopranos, but nobody ever had three such poets before, and we thank them.

A few years ago there was an interesting article in the Atlantic Monthly, which asked whether poetry could matter in the 21st century. I reread it a few moments before coming down tonight. You know, in this crazy world we're living in, everything's running around so fast. If it could matter, how could we revive the human value of poetry, its importance to our culture, to our sense of who we are and who we are becoming as individuals and as a people?

Well, tonight there is a poet who was not an American, but was very much of the Americas, and I think we would be remiss not to acknowledge. Here's what Octavio Paz said about his craft: ''Between what I see and what I say, between what I say and what I keep silent, between what I keep silent and what I dream, between what I dream and what I forget, poetry.''

That is what we celebrate here tonight. Does it have any value? Of course, it does. It made us happy. It made us nostalgic. It made us sad. It made us wiser tonight.

When I was a boy in high school, I was once required to memorize 100 lines from Macbeth—hardly designed to entice me to a public career. [*Laughter*] But then again, I learned about the dangers of blind ambitions—[*laughter*]—the fleeting nature of fame—[*laughter*]—the ultimate emptiness of power disconnected from higher purpose. Mr. Shakespeare made me a better President. [*Laughter*]

Something quite a lot to be said for all this, and I welcome you here tonight. Tonight we have honored the poetry of our Nation's past. Now I'd like for you to see some of the poets of our future, people whom Hillary and our Poets Laureate visited with today at Johnson Junior High School.

[*At this point, a video about the junior high school was shown.*]

The President. Now I'd like to turn the discussion over to the Director of our White House Millennium Project, Ellen Lovell.

[*Ms. Lovell invited audience members and Internet participants to read their favorite poem selections and to ask the three poets questions. The President was then asked to make closing remarks.*]

The President. Let me say, first of all, I thought the people who were in the audience who read their poems were absolutely fabulous, and I'd like to thank you all. You were great. Thank you.

Well, I'm supposed to end. I suppose the first thing I should say is that poets help me get over Macbeth. [*Laughter*] When I was about 21 and despairing, I came across those wonderful lines from Carl Sandburg, ''A tough will counts; so does desire. So does a rich, soft, wanting. Without rich wanting, nothing arrives.'' We want these children to have ambition. We just want it to be well-connected.

A lot of Presidents have wanted to be poets. [*Laughter*] George Washington actually tried his hand at poetry, writing that ''true happiness depends upon a quiet soul,'' as I told our Poets Laureate on the way out. And John Quincy Adams actually wanted to be a poet; he wanted to do that, but he just couldn't quite get there. [*Laughter*] So he settled for a lesser path. [*Laughter*] But still he composed verses all his life. Even when he was an old man in Congress, waiting to vote, he would write out little verses. He once wrote in the Congress, ''We must seize the moments as they pass, and snatch the retrieveless sunbeam as it flies.''

Lucky for you, I haven't written any poetry in over 20 years. [*Laughter*] And the poems I wrote to Hillary so long ago, I would still be a little embarrassed to read today. [*Laughter*]

But I would like to close with a particularly American poem about love of country, sacrifice, the conflict between mortality and the timeless value of a deed well done. It is Ralph Waldo Emerson's ''Concord Hymn,'' written

to honor the completion of the Battle Monument, commemorating the battles of Lexington and Concord in the Revolutionary War.

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept;
Alike the conqueror in silence sleeps;
And Time the ruined bridge has swept
Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,
We set to-day a votive stone;
That memory may their deed redeem,
When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit, that made those heroes dare
To die, and leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare
The shaft we raise to them and thee.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The lecture began at 7:30 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks on the Child Care Initiative and an Exchange With Reporters

April 23, 1998

The President. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Hillary and I are delighted to have all of you here. We thank Mr. Tobias for his work and the power of his example. I thank Secretary Shalala and Secretary Herman for their extraordinary work, and Secretary Rubin, in his absence. And I note the presence here by SBA Director Aida Alvarez, and our OMB Director, Frank Raines, in the back. I thank the Members of Congress who are here: Representatives Lois Capps, Rosa DeLauro, Sheila Jackson Lee, Sandy Levin, Patsy Mink, Tim Roemer, Ellen Tauscher, Lynn Woolsey, and Steny Hoyer.

There are many other Members of Congress who are supporting this child care initiative—two who are not here; three that I think I should mention are Senators Dodd, Jeffords, and Kohl, along with Senator Specter, who have given real bipartisan leadership to the child care initiative in the Senate.

Let me also say I'm delighted to see all the children here today. I like Take Our Daughters to Work Day. As Representative Capps pointed out, since her daughter works in the White House, she came to work with her daughter today instead of the other way around. [*Laughter*] But, for the rest of you, I like this day.

When my daughter started preschool and she was asked what her father did, she said that he works at McDonald's. [*Laughter*] So I decided I'd better take her to work with me, even though I realized it would result in a diminution of my status in her eyes. [*Laughter*] So then by the time she went to kindergarten, she had actually been to work with me, and they asked her what I did for a living, and she said, "Well, he drinks coffee, makes speeches, and talks on the telephone." [*Laughter*] So I'm delighted that all the children are here.

The idea of merging work and family is embodied in Take Our Daughters to Work Day. There's also another important idea embodied in it, which is that we want our daughters to believe, along with our sons, that they can aspire to do whatever it is they want to do, whatever they're willing to do, whatever they're prepared to make the effort to do. Now, if you want that to be a reality, we have to make a commitment to give all of our children the best possible childhoods. That's really what all this is about.

Last year Hillary and I sponsored two conferences that many of our administration people helped on and many of you participated—one on child care and the other one on early childhood and the brain. Now, what they showed is what all of you already know but what is still not widely accepted by decisionmakers in our society. They showed, first of all, that the early years are profoundly important and that an even greater percentage of a child's learning capacity and intellectual infrastructure is built up in those very early years. And they showed what we in the child care conference, what we've all been here to say today, that people are worried about whether they can find child care, whether they can afford it, and whether it will be good child care.