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cochairs Alan and Susan Patricof; Steve Grossman, national chair; Leonard Barrack, national finance chair; and Fran Katz, national finance director, Democratic National Committee; and fashion designer Ralph Lauren. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

August 1, 1998

Good morning. Today Hillary and I are at the fire station in Amagansett, Long Island, New York, one of many beautiful communities on Long Island, where we're joined today by doctors, nurses, breast cancer patients, and public health advocates, to talk about something that concerns all Americans: making a Patients' Bill of Rights the law of the land.

I'm also very proud to be joined by Congressman Michael Forbes and his family. Congressman Forbes is a Republican who is cosponsoring bipartisan legislation to achieve a genuine Patients' Bill of Rights.

We all know that our health care system is rapidly changing. Since 1990 the number of Americans in managed care has nearly doubled. Today, most Americans, 160 million of us, are in managed care plans. I think that, on balance, managed care has been good for America because it's made health care more affordable and more accessible for more Americans. But sometimes cost cutting can lead to lower standards. That's when the bottomline becomes more important than patients' lives. And when families have nowhere to turn when their loved ones are harmed by health care plans' bad decisions, when there's a denial of specialist care or emergency care when they're plainly needed and recommended by physicians, when those kinds of things happen, we know we have to take action.

Whether in managed care or traditional care, every single American deserves quality care. I'm doing everything I can as President to help to meet that challenge. For 9 months I have worked in good faith with lawmakers of both parties to pass a strong, enforceable, bipartisan Patients' Bill of Rights, a bill that covers individual and group plans, a bill that guarantees access to specialists and emergency room care, a bill that guarantees doctors are not receiving secret financial incentives to limit care, a bill that guarantees a remedy to families who have suffered harm because of bad decisions by their health plans. And for 9 months the American people have waited.

Finally, the Republican leadership has proposed a partisan bill that does not provide these guarantees. Now they've left town without taking action, leaving millions of Americans without the health care protections they need. Any bill that doesn't guarantee these protections is a Patients' Bill of Rights in name only.

Today the American Medical Association, the American Nurses Association, the National Breast Cancer Coalition, the American College of Emergency Room Physicians, the American Small Business Alliance, and the National Partnership for Women and Families have all come forward to say the plan of the Republican leadership is an empty promise; it simply will not protect the American public or ensure the quality health care they deserve. Now Congress should rise to its responsibilities and guarantee a Patients' Bill of Rights, and they should reject proposals that are more loopholed than law.

Until Congress acts, I will continue to do everything I can to ensure that more Americans are protected by a Patients' Bill of Rights. In February I signed an executive memorandum that extends those protections to 85 million Americans in Federal health plans. Last month the Department of Veterans Affairs put in place a new health care appeals procedure for 3 million veterans.

Today we're building on our efforts. I'm pleased to announce that the Defense Department is issuing a directive to make the protections of the Patients' Bill of Rights real for more than 8 million servicemen and women, their families, and Defense Department employees. These men and women stand ready every day to keep our Nation safe. They should not have to worry about the heath care they or their families receive.

This action brings us one step closer to a Patients' Bill of Rights for all Americans, but Congress must act. And so once again, I ask Congress to do its part. There are just a few weeks left in this legislative session,

only a few weeks left to improve health care and strengthen our families. Let's put progress ahead of partnership. I ask all Members of Congress to join Congressman Forbes, me, and the other Democrats and Republicans who want a real Patients' Bill of Rights.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Amagansett Fire Station in Long Island, NY.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception in East Hampton

August 1, 1998

Thank you. This is one clever man. I want you to watch this. You see this? He took the watch again. [*Laughter*] Thank you, Jonathan. Thank you, Christopher. I want to thank Andy and Jeff and Elizabeth and all the others who were cochairs tonight. I want to thank Sandy Thurman and Richard Socarides and Marsha Scott, who've done a lot of great work for me and on my behalf with so many of you.

And I want to thank Brian Rich for serving as a White House volunteer. The whole place runs on volunteers, believe it or not, to an astonishing extent. I want to thank Steve and Len and all fine people here from the DNC, and all of you for being here.

Last night we were with some people, and a person who's lived here for many years said, "You know, the last sitting President to visit Long Island was William McKinley—the eastern end of Long Island—William McKinley." And everybody laughed. They didn't exactly see me as a natural successor to William McKinley. We don't think of him in the same terms that I'm frequently painted these days.

But I'll tell you an interesting thing about William McKinley. He was the last of a line of either four or five generals, Union generals from Ohio, to be elected President between 1868 and 1896, that included Ulysses Grant; his successor, Rutherford Hayes; James Garfield, who, unfortunately, was assassinated and lived only a few months; Mr. McKinley—Mr. Harrison might have been from Ohio; I'm not sure. But the point is, if you were a Union general from Ohio, you had about a 50 percent chance of being elected President between the end of the Civil War and 1900.

Now, what has that got to do with all this today? There's a reason they won. They won because Ohio was the heartland of America at the time and because they embodied the idea of the Nation for which Abraham Lincoln gave his life—that slavery was wrong, that discrimination based on race was wrong, and that we needed a strong, united country for America and for all Americans to fulfill their God-given capacity.

Throughout American history, one of our two parties has always been essentially the party of the Nation. And even though the Democrats, I regret to say, after the Civil War, were just kind of coming to that—they were the party of immigrants, and that was good, and they stood against discrimination against immigrants—but for all kinds of reasons, we didn't become the party of the Nation until the election of Woodrow Wilson. And then, our fate was sealed when Franklin Roosevelt was elected and Harry Truman succeeded him.

We haven't always been right on every issue in the 20th century, but I think it's clear that we have been on the right side of history. And I think that's why you're here today. And a lot of you said a lot of very kind things to me as I worked my way through the crowd, and I appreciate them more than you know. When I ran for President in 1992, I did it because I thought our country was divided, that we hadn't taken care of the business before us, and we certainly weren't planning for the future very well. It seemed to me that we needed to be trying to create an America in which there was genuine opportunity for every responsible citizen, in which we were continuing to lead the world toward peace and freedom and prosperity, and in which we were coming closer together as one community.

Or, if you put it in another way—if you go back and read the Declaration of Independence, it basically lays out the things that our country has been for all along. We just never perfectly lived up to them. We've always been for deepening the meaning of