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training budget and make many—but not all—of the critical investments in our future that I believe are necessary for America to succeed in the 21st century. This afternoon the Senate Labor-HHS appropriations subcommittee voted to restore full funding for home heating and cooling assistance for low-income families and summer jobs for disadvantaged youth. Unlike the House Republican budget, they voted to make many of the essential investments in our children for which I have been fighting.

The Senate subcommittee, however, did not adequately fund several education and training investments that I believe are vitally important to our Nation's future. For example, they did not provide the resources necessary for us to move forward to ensure that every 8-year-old can read on his or her own and every 12-year-old can log on to the information superhighway. The Senate bill is a good first step, but there is still more work to do.

I look forward to working with the Senate on this bill to expand educational opportunity, improve child care, set voluntary national academic standards, protect continuity in critical health programs, and help young people in high-poverty areas. Finally, as I have said before, Congress must take action to modernize our schools and help provide smaller classes with well-qualified teachers.

Letter to the Majority Leader of the Senate on the Patients' Bill of Rights

September 1, 1998

Dear Senator Lott:

Thank you for your letter regarding the patients' bill of rights. I am pleased to reiterate my commitment to working with you—and all Republicans and Democrats in the Congress—to pass long overdue legislation this year.

Since last November, I have called on the Congress to pass a strong, enforceable, and bipartisan patients' bill of rights. During this time, I signed an Executive Memorandum to ensure that the 85 million Americans in federal health plans receive the patient protections they need, and I have indicated my support for bipartisan legislation that would extend these protections to all Americans. With precious few weeks remaining before the Congress adjourns, we must work together to respond to the nation's call for us to improve the quality of health care Americans are receiving.

As I mentioned in my radio address this past Saturday, ensuring basic patient protections is not and should not be a political issue. I was therefore disappointed by the partisan manner in which the Senate Republican Leadership bill was developed. The lack of consultation with the White House or any Democrats during the drafting of your legislation contributed to its serious shortcomings and the fact it has failed to receive the support of either patients or doctors. The bill leaves millions of Americans without critical patient protections, contains provisions that are more rhetorical than substantive, completely omits patient protections that virtually every expert in the field believes are basic and essential, and includes ''poison pill'' provisions that have nothing to do with a patients' bill of rights. More specifically, the bill:

Does not cover all health plans and leaves more than 100 million Americans completely unprotected. The provisions in the Senate Republican Leadership bill apply only to self-insured plans. As a consequence, the bill leaves out more than 100 million Americans, including millions of workers in small businesses. This approach contrasts with the bipartisan Kassebaum-Kennedy insurance reform law, which provided a set of basic protections for all Americans.

Lets HMOs, not health professionals, define medical necessity. The external appeals process provision in the Senate Republican Leadership bill makes the appeals process meaningless by allowing the HMOs themselves, rather than informed health professionals, to define what services are medically necessary. This loophole will make it very difficult for patients to prevail on appeals to get the treatment doctors believe they need.

Fails to guarantee direct access to specialists. The Senate Republican Leadership proposal fails to ensure that patients with serious health problems have direct access to the

specialists they need. We believe that patients with conditions like cancer or heart disease should not be denied access to the doctors they need to treat their conditions.

Fails to protect patients from abrupt changes in care in the middle of treatment. The Senate Republican Leadership bill fails to assure continuity-of-care protections when an employer changes health plans. This deficiency means that, for example, pregnant women or individuals undergoing care for a chronic illness may have their care suddenly altered mid course, potentially causing serious health consequences.

Reverses course on emergency room protections. The Senate Republican Leadership bill backs away from the emergency room protections that Congress implemented in a bipartisan manner for Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. The bill includes a watered-down provision that does not require health plans to cover patients who go to an emergency room outside their network and does not ensure coverage for any treatment beyond an initial screening. These provisions put patients at risk for the huge costs associated with critical emergency treatment.

Allows financial incentives to threaten critical patient care. The Senate Republican Leadership bill fails to prohibit secret financial incentives to providers. This would leave patients vulnerable to financial incentives that limit patient care.

Fails to hold health plans accountable when their actions cause patients serious harm. The proposed per-day penalties in the Senate Republican Leadership bill fail to hold health plans accountable when patients suffer serious harm or even death because of a plan's wrongful action. For example, if a health plan improperly denies a lifesaving cancer treatment to a child, it will incur a penalty only for the number of days it takes to reverse its decision; it will not have to pay the family for all the damages the family will suffer as the result of having a child with a now untreatable disease. And because the plan will not have to pay for all the harm it causes, it will have insufficient incentive to change its health care practices in the future.

Includes "poison pill" provisions that have nothing to do with a patients' bill of rights. For example, expanding Medical Savings Accounts (MSAs) before studying the current demonstration is premature, at best, and could undermine an already unstable insurance market. As I have said before, I would veto a bill that does not address these serious flaws. I could not sanction presenting a bill to the American people that is nothing more than an empty promise. At the same time, as I have repeatedly made clear, I remain fully committed to working with you, as well as the Democratic Leadership, to pass a meaningful patients' bill of rights before the Congress adjourns. We can make progress in this area if, and only if, we work together to provide needed health care protections to ensure Americans have much needed confidence in their health care system.

Producing a patients' bill of rights that can attract bipartisan support and receive my signature will require a full and open debate on the Senate floor. There must be adequate time and a sufficient number of amendments to ensure that the bill gives patients the basic protections they need and deserve. I am confident that you and Senator Daschle can work out a process that accommodates the scheduling needs of the Senate and allows you to address fully the health care needs of the American public.

Last year, we worked together in a bipartisan manner to pass a balanced budget including historic Medicare reforms and the largest investment in children's health care since the enactment of Medicaid. This year, we have another opportunity to work together to improve health care for millions of Americans.

I urge you to make the patients' bill of rights the first order of business for the Senate. Further delay threatens the ability of the Congress to pass a bill that I can sign into law this year. I stand ready to work with you and Senator Daschle to ensure that patients—not politics—are our first priority.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

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

The President's News Conference With President Boris Yeltsin of Russia in Moscow

September 2, 1998

President Yeltsin. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the official visit of the President of the United States, Bill Clinton, to Russia is coming to an end. We have had intensive, productive negotiations. We have managed to discuss a wide range of topical issues. I would like to emphasize the exchanges were sincere and keen. The dialog was marked by the spirit of mutual understanding.

Responsibility of our two countries for maintaining and strengthening peace and stability is obvious. That is why we have paid special attention to the discussion of the entire spectrum of security issues in the world.

The discussion has included the implementation of international and bilateral treaties and agreements concerning the weapons of mass destruction, as well as the elaboration of common approaches to dealing with the threat of nuclear weapons proliferation and their delivery means.

Unfortunately, this is not the only major task the humanity struggles to resolve. That is why President Clinton and I have discussed global threats and challenges. Our positions on this issue have coincided, and this closeness of approaches is reflected in the joint statement on common security changes on the threshold of the 21st century. I consider this document to be a significant step towards strengthening strategic partnership between Russia and the United States.

We have also had substantial talks on the most topical international issues. And there are quite a few such issues. I'll put it frankly: Here our approaches have not always completely coincided. Russia rejects the use of power methods as a matter of principle. Conflicts of today have no military solutions, be it in Kosovo or around Iraq or Afghanistan or others. Also we do not accept the NATO centrism idea for the new European security architecture. Nevertheless, our talks have been conducive to greater mutual understanding on these issues.

Of course, we could not do without discussing economy problems. Current dimensions of our economic relations should be brought up to a qualitatively new level. We shall have to suffer through much blood, sweat, and tears before new forms of business cooperation worthy of our two great powers are found, reforms that would be able to withstand volatile circumstances. There exist quite a few opportunities for this. These are mentioned in our joint statement on economic issues.

In conclusion, I would like to say—and I hope Bill will agree with me—the summit was a success. This meeting, the 15th in a row, confirmed once again when Presidents of Russia and the United States join their efforts, no issue is too big for them.

Thank you for your kind attention.

President Clinton. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for your hospitality and for giving Hillary and me and our team the chance to come to Moscow again.

Over the past 5 years I have been in this great, historic city in times of bright hope and times of uncertainty. But throughout, I have witnessed the remarkable transformation of this nation to democracy and to a more open economy. We all know that this meeting comes at a challenging time for the Russian people. But I don't believe anyone could ever have doubted that there would be obstacles on Russia's road to a vibrant economy and a strong democracy. I don't also believe that anyone can seriously doubt the determination of the Russian people to build a brighter, better, stronger future.

Russia is important to America. Our economies are connected; we share values, interests, and friendship; we share security interests and heavy security responsibilities. In our discussions, President Yeltsin and I spoke about Russia's options for stabilizing its economy and restoring confidence. I reaffirmed America's strong view that Russia can move beyond today's crisis and create growth and good jobs but only if it carries forward with its transformation, with a strong and fair tax system, greater rule of law, dealing forthrightly with financial institutions, having regulation that protects against abuses, and yes, developing an appropriate safety net for people who are hurt during times of change.