AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

pay this debt off. It is something that no one could have thought imaginable just a few years ago.

Tomorrow I'm going to reveal the details of our plan to strengthen Medicare and preserve it for at least another quarter century and add a prescription drug benefit which will be affordable, which can be managed. But this is a big problem—I told those of you who came to the airport to meet me that one of the most stunning facts of life, if you're over 65 today and you're on Medicare, is that the average senior citizen is now spending a higher percentage of his or her income, out of pocket, for health care than they were spending in 1965, before Medicare went in. Why? Overwhelmingly, because of prescription drugs.

So if we can do something that is financially responsible to help our seniors deal with this burden, we ought to do so. We can now and we should.

Because of the size of the surplus, we'll be able to pay the debt off over the next 15 years, and at the same time create a trust fund for children and education of over $150 billion that we can use for after-school programs, to make sure all our kids have health insurance—for a whole host of other things that need to be done.

Now, let me come back to the general point. I'm here not as a candidate, because I think it matters that the ideas and the values that we fought for be continued; because it's important to me that Sam and Chris and people like them are in the Congress. And it's important to me that—we know the Republicans will always have more money than we do. Today they'll be saying, ''Well, who cares if we pay the debt off; let's have a bigger tax cut that will be skewed to most of you''—most of you would be better off in the short run being at a Republican fundraiser. [*Laughter*] You would be, and you know it. [*Laughter*]

But on the other hand, if you look at the performance of the stock market, if you look at the fact that we've got the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the longest peacetime expansion in history, the highest surplus as a percentage of our economy since 1951—there's something to be said for moving us all forward together. And there's something to be said for looking to the long run, as well as the short run.

Everyone has to balance doing what is most pleasing to everyone today and thinking about what is best for the country over the long run. I've tried to take this country into the 21st century with certain basic ideas—that we could balance the budget and increase our investment in children and education, health care, and the environment; that we could grow the economy and continue to improve the environment—and we have. The air is cleaner; the water is cleaner; the food is safer; we've got 90 percent of our children immunized for the first time in history; we've set aside more land in preservation than any administration in the history of America, except those of the two Roosevelts.

So because we had good ideas—not because Bill Clinton was President, but because our ideas were right—I am glad I was given the chance to serve now. If my ability to speak, communicate, work hard, and take incoming fire had anything to do with those successes, I'm grateful.

But the most important thing is that what we stand for now, as a party, is a new direction, a departure from where either party was in the seventies and eighties, and the kind of thing that we ought to embrace going into the 21st century. And we have evidence that it works. There are lots of issues up there in Washington that we're fighting for now. Sometimes we have agreement; we're going to agree on two things that I think are great—I'll give the Republicans a little pat on the back here—the Congress is going to overwhelmingly vote, apparently, to renew the disability on disabled Americans who go in the work force and lose their Medicaid coverage. And that can enable us to get hundreds of thousands of more workers to grow without inflation.

There are a lot of disabled people who want to work, but their medical bills are $20,000, $30,000 a year, sometimes more, and they're paid by the Government. If they make ''X'' salary—anything much above poverty—they lose that Government health insurance. And that's bad for you, because they won't take the job. And we're still going to pay for their health care, as we should. So

this way we pay for their health care just like we were; but they take a job, they earn money, they pay taxes just like you do. And it helps the economy go. It's a good thing.

The other thing that there is apparently unanimous support on—at least in the House, and I'm thrilled about it, this is something that Hillary cares very much about—is continuing support for children who come out of foster care at the age of 18 and today are cut off all support—and even though they have no place to go, they have no adopted families, they have nothing. This is a huge problem in New York, a bigger problem in New York than anyplace else because New York has the largest number. But I told someone the other day, the first person besides my wife who ever mentioned this to me was my cousin, who runs the HUD office in the little town in Arkansas where I was born, population 11,000 now. So this is a national problem.

And here are two things where we agree. I'm hoping that we can get more of them to agree with us on some other things that are important. If you look at the Patients' Bill of Rights—the Republicans, on Medicare, want me to, in effect, force more people on Medicare into managed care, but they're against guaranteeing people in managed care the guarantees of the Patients' Bill of Rights.

I'm not against managed care. I've always thought that we ought to manage the health system like every other system, as well as we possibly can. But every system should be managed to deliver its mission at the lowest possible cost, not to compromise the mission. The mission is to give people quality health care at the lowest possible cost.

And if you need to see a specialist and you can't, that's bad. If you get hit in an accident in a big city and you have to pass three hospitals to get to the hospital with the emergency room that's in the plan, that's bad. If you work for a small business and they change their health care provider, and your husband is in chemotherapy and it's a 6-month treatment and you're supposed to change providers in the middle of the treatment, that's bad. If the same thing happens, and your wife is 6 months pregnant and you're supposed to change your ob-gyn because there's a different one in your new health care plan, that's bad. All these things happen today. Why? If it takes you forever and a day to get a decision because of the layers and layers of appeals, so that, finally, you get the right decision, but it's too late to save your life, that's bad.

And that's why 200—200 organizations—the doctors, the nurses, health consumer groups, everybody, endorsed our Patients' Bill of Rights. There's one organization against it, the health insurers. And we have the votes to pass this, if the Republican leadership will give us a clean vote on it.

But it's a classic example of the difference in the two parties. We're not against managed care. If we said we're against change, and they were for change, and they didn't care what happened to people, that would be like an old-time debate, old-time—we say, okay, we're for managed care. We'd just like to have people protected.

Same thing on this gun issue. This is a huge issue. Thirteen kids a day get shot and killed—13—that's a lot of kids. You say it's a big country. Pretty small country if it's one of yours. And we had this horrible carnage at Littleton—the whole country up in arms. The Senate passes this range of modest gun restraint measures: getting rid of the big ammunition clips on assault weapons that come in from other countries; saying that if a juvenile commits a serious crime they shouldn't be able to own a handgun when they turn 18; closing the gun show loophole; putting the child trigger locks on there.

And on the gun show loophole, which was the most controversial, the Vice President broke the tie in the Senate and we roll into the House and there is this angst. So what happens? The NRA wants the vote put off, so they put off the vote until after the recess; and during the recess they wear everybody out, and they come back and deep-six stuff that is very modest. And their answer is, well, we should punish these boys because they broke the law, these dead boys.

You know, how would you feel if I gave the following speech: I've served as President for 6½ years. I've done a searching inventory of my record, and I have decided that I have been deficient in standing up for the constitutional rights of America. In particular, we all have a constitutional right to travel,

and I think it's absolutely terrible that you have to license your cars and have a drivers license—[*laughter*]—and that we regulate travel in any way, shape, or form. It is an unconscionable burden, and we're going to get rid of all of it. We have 8-year-olds out their driving cars at 100 miles an hour; that's good, it's their constitutional right to do it. [*Laughter*]

You're laughing. That's their position, isn't it? I mean, you would think—if a politician stood up and said that, you would think they had a screw loose. [*Laughter*] But this is a huge issue. Now, we're not talking about confiscating anybody's guns. We're not talking about interfering with anybody's hunting rights or sporting rights.

When we passed the Brady bill—Chris and Sam will remember this—their argument against the Brady bill was, ''This won't do you any good, because no criminal ever goes to a gun store to buy a gun.'' You remember that? That was their big argument: ''They're not dumb enough to do that.'' Okay? Five years and 400,000 rejected sales later, with a 25-year low in the crime rate and violent crime down even more than non-violent crime, they no longer can make that argument.

But now we say, okay, there are more and more people, since we're checking on them, who are buying guns at the gun shows and the flea markets. We'll give you that much, so let's go check them. They say, ''Oh, no, goodness, no, we couldn't do that.'' Or if the—''It's okay if it's over-the-counter at a gun show, but not if it's in the parking lot.''

Now, you may have this image that there's a sort of a—maybe a convention center in Hartford, where there's a gun show, and it's two blocks out to the parking lot and you don't want to make the guy take the automatic check—that's not what goes on. Most of these gun shows, they're down little country roads, and you turn right and you're in a little field. You know, you back up on both sides of the lane and you open your trunk, and you get down your pickup. So if you're out in the parking lot, it means you're walking around to the front of the car. This is—this is just—it just doesn't make any sense.

But what I want to tell you is, we have—I think the defining difference between the two parties today is no longer what they used to say about us. We proved we're more fiscally responsible than they are. We've got a more fiscally responsible program right here. We have proved that we can grow the economy. We've proved that we're for sensible defense spending. We've proved that we can do the things that we're supposed to do in foreign policy that—it's really almost, the most important thing is how we define community and what our mutual responsibilities are to one another.

That's what the Patients' Bill of Rights is about. It's true. We'll have to pay out—you know, it'll be a buck or two a month. Our estimate is that the Federal health insurance program costs less than a dollar a month more, now that we have the protections of the Patients' Bill of Rights. So that means that everybody that doesn't ever need the Patients' Bill of Rights—who's a Federal employee—is getting socked for about $10 a year. I think it's worth it. I think it's worth it as a part of our shared responsibility to protect people.

So if you close this gun show loophole, 90-plus—95 percent, maybe more, of those people are honest as the day is long, and they'll have to hang around and wait for their background checks to be done. And sometimes it'll be a little bit of a pain—to increase the chances of saving 13 kids a day? I think it's worth it.

This is really what's going on. It's no longer—it's not a question even about tax cuts. We're for tax cuts. The questions is, how big should they be; what are our other responsibilities; how should they be structured? And what I want you to understand is that these ideas matter. It matters whether we give out all this Federal money in education and tell the locals of the States, ''Just do whatever you want to with it''; or whether we say, ''We think you ought to end social promotion, but have mandatory summer schools for kids who fail.'' We shouldn't declare them fit. And we think we ought to have every school district that needs an after-school program ought to have one, and we're going to give you money to help you. It's our definition of community.

It's not us telling them how to run the schools. This is what local research shows