

And I say again, there are many good uses for the surplus. I have my ideas; the Congress has their ideas. But first things first—we have to take of this problem, and do it now.

Now, we want to make sure that this plan is financially responsible, that it can be paid for, that it won't break the bank. Here's what we propose to do: My plan will make a prescription drug benefit available to all Medicare recipients but will provide extra help for those with lower incomes. For people up to 135 percent of the poverty rate, we will waive the co-pay and the monthly premium. But people with incomes a little higher than that, we will have other subsidies, not quite as generous. But for everyone, for a modest monthly premium, Medicare will pay for half of all the prescription drug costs, over the next few years, up to a ceiling of \$5,000. In the first year, we have to start with a ceiling of \$2,000, because it's a big program and we've got to put it in and prove we can make it work. But under my plan, I will ask the Congress to approve and fund going to a \$5,000 ceiling drug benefit, half of all the costs, now, with no deductible.

This drug benefit is one that virtually all of our seniors can afford, and it is constructed in a way America can afford. It will help millions and millions of people. Older and disabled Americans will save even more on prescription drugs under our plan because Medicare's private contractors will get big volume discounts that seniors could never get on their own. So when they pay for half the price, that half will be a much smaller amount that would otherwise be the case.

Now, what I would like to say not only to those of you in this room—where I suppose I'm preaching to the saved, as we say down home—but to all Americans, including those who are not in this room, is that this is something that is important that goes way beyond health care and way beyond money. How can you put a price on being able to see the birth of a grandchild or to enjoy them as they grow up or read to them or take them fishing or be active with your friends and family? How can you put a price, if you are a child, on being able to know and spend time with and enjoy your grandparents?

There is no dollar value we can put on providing the best quality of life we can. And

I want you all to understand, we can afford this. If this is not done, it is because somebody made a different decision to do something else with the money. This is not welfare. This is not some blind gift. This is something we are doing for the integrity of families through the generations.

Our country is in the best shape it's been economically, maybe ever, certainly in a long time. And what we're going to do now will define what kind of country we will be well into the 21st century. Are we going to squander this money we worked so hard for after only 6 years of effort, turned around an unbelievable record of fiscal irresponsibility, or are we going to pay off our debts in the bank and pay off our debts to our families—not only to our parents and grandparents, but to future generations? That is the question.

So I want to ask you to join me. You know, Hanna said she didn't know much about politics. I thought she made a pretty good political speech, myself. *[Laughter]* But she said something that's really important. She said, "You know, I don't understand why this should be a political issue." You know, sometimes when things get real tense in Washington, you know, and some of my friends in the other party get real excited, I say, "Hey, loosen up, you know. We're all getting older; none of us are going to be here forever. People get a chance to vote every election. Loosen up. Relax, No one escapes time and age. Republicans age just like Democrats." *[Laughter]*

People who are independents still get sick every now and then, even though they refuse to register in a political party. This is not a political issue anywhere in America, and it should not be a political issue in Washington, DC. This is something we can do together for the future of America.

I want you to reach out to your Representatives from Illinois. You are represented in this State by both Republicans and Democrats in the United States Congress, more or less fairly apportioned. I wish it were different, but there it is. *[Laughter]* You can write to them. You can call them. You can say, "Do this not only for us, but do it for our children and our future. Do it because we're all aging and it's a high-class problem, that we're living longer."

But we have to prepare for the day when the baby boomers retire. And we should not wait another day to provide the prescription drug benefit. And we have the money to do it. This is simply a matter of choice. I ask you, without regard to your party, to reach out to the members of your congressional delegation and say, "This is the right choice for our future."

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in the Grand Army of the Republic Memorial Hall at the Chicago Cultural Center. In his remarks, he referred to Anna L. Willis, commissioner, Chicago Department on Aging; and pharmacist Linda Esposito, vice president, Illinois Pharmacists Association.

### **Exchange With Reporters at Wrigley Field in Chicago**

*June 30, 1999*

#### **First Lady**

**Q.** Mr. President, Hillary is a Yankees fan. Are you still a Cubs fan? [*Laughter*]

**The President.** Yes, and so is she. You know what she said. Don't play press games here. [*Laughter*] This is about sports, not politics.

#### **Northern Ireland Peace Process**

**Q.** Mr. President, what did Tony Blair tell you when you had—

**Q.** Did Tony Blair give you an update?

**The President.** I got an update from Tony Blair on where things are, and we're now in touch with the various parties, and I expect to make some more phone calls sometime in the next hour or so. It's an all-nighter.

**Q.** Will the talks be extended tonight?

**The President.** Yes, I think by most standards they've already been extended. But I do expect so. I think they'll work quite late.

#### **First Lady**

**Q.** Do you think the First Lady will let you keep the jacket, since she's a big Cubs fan?

**The President.** Yes. [*Laughter*] But I will have to disclose it. I'll have to share wearing rights.

NOTE: The exchange began at 4:50 p.m. in the Chicago Cubs' locker room. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

### **Proclamation 7206—To Modify Duty-Free Treatment Under the Generalized System of Preferences and for Other Purposes**

*June 30, 1999*

*By the President of the United States of America*

#### **A Proclamation**

1. Pursuant to section 502 of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (the "1974 Act") (19 U.S.C. 2462), the President may designate countries as beneficiary developing countries and least-developed beneficiary developing countries for purposes of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).

2. Pursuant to section 503(c)(2)(A) of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2463(c)(2)(A)), beneficiary developing countries, except those designated as least-developed beneficiary developing countries, are subject to competitive need limitations on the preferential treatment afforded under the GSP to eligible articles.

3. Pursuant to section 503(c)(2)(C) of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2463(c)(2)(C)), a country that is no longer treated as a beneficiary developing country with respect to an eligible article may be redesignated as a beneficiary developing country with respect to such article if imports of such article from such country did not exceed the competitive need limitations in section 503(c)(2)(A) of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2463(c)(2)(A)) during the preceding calendar year.

4. Pursuant to section 503(c)(2)(F) of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2463(c)(2)(F)), the President may disregard the competitive need limitation provided in section 503(c)(2)(A)(i)(II) of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2463(c)(2)(A)(i)(II)) with respect to any eligible article from any beneficiary developing country if the aggregate appraised value of the imports of such article into the United States during the preceding calendar year does not exceed the applicable amount set