

Thanksgiving. I encourage Americans to gather in their homes, places of worship, and community centers to share the spirit of understanding and prayer and to reinforce ties of family and community.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 10:46 a.m., November 24, 2003]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on November 25. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this proclamation. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks on Arrival From the United Kingdom

November 21, 2003

Good evening. Laura and I have just returned from Great Britain, where we had a fantastic trip. Her Majesty the Queen was a great host. Of course, we spent some time today in Tony Blair's constituency, which was not only a lot of fun, but it was a chance to continue our dialog about how to fight and defeat terror. We've got a special relationship with Great Britain. That relationship was reaffirmed during the last 3 days.

Back here at home, I'm pleased that the Congress passed the Healthy Forests Initiative, which will help us maintain our national treasure, our forests, again providing a commonsense strategy and making sure that the fire hazards that we've seen over the last couple of summers are mitigated as best as possible.

Secondly, I was pleased that House of Representatives passed an energy bill. This Nation needs an energy bill. It needs an energy plan. A minority of Senators are holding it up. For the sake of our national security and economic security, the Senate has got to pass this bill.

And finally, as you know, the Medicare legislation is—will be debated tonight in the House of Representatives and eventually in the Senate. It is an important time for Members of the U.S. Congress to honor our obligations to our seniors by providing a modern Medicare system, a system that includes prescription drugs and choices for our seniors. I urge the House and the Senate to pass this good piece of legislation.

We're glad to be home. It's good to see you all. Good night. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:27 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Queen Elizabeth II and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Proclamation 7739—National Family Week, 2003

November 21, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

As Americans gather during Thanksgiving week, we honor our families, and we recognize the family as a source of help, hope, and stability for our citizens and for our country.

Strong families make our Nation better. They teach our children values and help them become responsible citizens. We must encourage families to be loving and compassionate, generous and supportive, and to serve and help others.

On this Thanksgiving week, we also pay respect to our brave military families whose loved ones are on active duty, many on the front lines of freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan. These families provide a bond of love and encouragement to our men and women in uniform as they defend liberty and protect our Nation.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 23 through November 29, 2003, as National

Family Week. I invite the States, communities, and all the people of the United States to join together in observing this week with appropriate ceremonies and activities to honor our Nation's families.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., November 25, 2003]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 22, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on November 26.

The President's Radio Address

November 22, 2003

Good morning. This week Congress made significant progress toward improving the lives of America's senior citizens. The House of Representatives passed legislation that would bring prescription drug coverage to Medicare and lead to health care choices for our seniors. This legislation, if also passed by the Senate, would represent the greatest improvement in senior health care since Medicare was enacted in 1965.

When these reforms take full effect, our seniors would see real savings in their health care costs. Within 6 months, seniors would be eligible for a drug discount card that would save them between 10 and 25 percent off the retail price of most drugs. When the full drug benefit arrives in 2006, all seniors become eligible for drug coverage for a monthly premium of about \$35. For most seniors without coverage today, the Medicare drug plan would cut their annual drug bills roughly in half.

Seniors with the highest drug bills would save the most, and seniors with the greatest need would get the most help. Low-income seniors would pay a reduced premium or no premium at all for the new drug coverage. And low-income seniors would also have lower copayments for their medicines.

Here is an example of how this benefit would work. A senior taking drugs to treat arthritis, high cholesterol, and migraines has a typical drug bill of about \$250 a month, or \$3,000 a year. With this legislation, this retiree would save \$1,680 after paying her insurance premiums—more than half her current drug costs.

Under the new reforms, seniors would have more choices of health care coverage. Should seniors want to stay in traditional Medicare and receive a prescription drug benefit, they would be able to do so. Some seniors may want expanded coverage for extended hospital stays or protection against high out-of-pocket medical expenses, or they may want the coverage that comes with managed care plans. Under the new law, all those choices would be available. With choice, seniors would have more control over their health care options, and health plans would compete for the business with better coverage.

We're on the verge of success because of bipartisan leadership and because of the support of many advocates for seniors, including the AARP. Throughout many months of discussion and debate, we've remained focused on the clear objective: to modernize and strengthen the Medicare system. And by working together, we're close to meeting that goal.

In the nearly 40 years since Medicare was launched, this is the most significant opportunity for any Congress to improve health coverage for our seniors. Now we're down to the final stages. This Congress will decide whether or not seniors will have prescription drug coverage under Medicare, and this Congress will decide whether America's seniors will have better health care choices.

I urge all Members of Congress to remember what is at stake and to remember the promise we have made to America's seniors. The quality of their health care and the future strength of Medicare depends on the passage of this much-needed legislation.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:35 p.m. on November 21 for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 22. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November