

Week Ending Friday, January 2, 1998

The President's Radio Address

December 27, 1997

Good morning. The holidays are a time when families come together to celebrate the season with love. And they remind us of our bonds of duty to care for one another. Today I'd like to talk to you about how we're expanding the shield of Medicare protection to honor our parents and grandparents in important new ways in the new year.

Looking back over 1997, it's clear that we achieved major reforms of the Medicare system that will help Americans live healthier, happier, longer lives. This year's bipartisan balanced budget agreement reaffirmed our commitment to preserving and strengthening Medicare. We extended the life of the Medicare Trust Fund until at least 2010. We made Medicare protection more affordable for low-income Americans. We modernized the Medicare system by expanding choice, opening up competition, and controlling costs. And we created a blue ribbon commission to examine ways to ensure that Medicare will serve baby boomers and our children as well as it has served our parents.

Now, as part of the balanced budget agreement, we're also implementing expanded Medicare benefits to provide greater protection to Americans in the fight against cancer. On New Year's Day, we'll introduce a series of changes in Medicare that will make screening, prevention, and detection of cancer more affordable and frequent. We're ringing in the new year resolved to take new steps in our battle against cancer, one of mankind's oldest foes.

First, we will guarantee the option of annual mammograms for every woman over 40 and, by waiving the deductible, we'll make annual breast cancer screenings more affordable. Right now, nearly half of older women do not get regular mammograms. By making mammograms more accessible and detecting cancer earlier, we can significantly increase

the likelihood of successful treatment for this disease. Hillary has conducted a longstanding campaign to encourage older women to get these crucial tests, and these new changes will bring us closer to success in those efforts.

Second, we're expanding coverage for the early detection of cervical cancer. We have sophisticated tests to pick up early signs of cervical cancer and, from now on, Medicare will pay for regular access to this lifesaving technology.

And third, for the first time we'll now cover regular examinations for colon/rectal cancer. Most Americans don't receive this important preventive test, but when we catch this cancer early, we can beat it more than 90 percent of the time.

Nearly every American family has been touched by the shadow of cancer. My own mother passed away just about 4 years ago from cancer, and especially at this time of year, I miss her a lot. So many other families have the same story. That's why these actions are so important. By detecting cancer early on we offer our loved ones one of the greatest gifts of all, the gifts of life, health, and many holidays to come.

Thanks for listening. Happy holidays, and have a happy and healthy new year.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:16 p.m. on December 24 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 27.

Statement on the Health Care Task Force Civil Case

December 29, 1997

While the Department of Justice is still reviewing whether to appeal Judge Lamberth's ruling, I am quite confident that Mr. Magaziner acted appropriately. Any suggestion to the contrary is unfair and unsupported