

against the debilitating costs of unforeseen illness.

Third, we know that in recent years too many employers have walked away from their commitments to provide retirement health benefits to longtime, loyal employees. Under our proposal, these employees, also between the ages of 55 and 65, will be allowed to buy into their former employers' health plans until they qualify for Medicare. And thank you, Congressman, for your long fight on this issue.

Taken together, these steps will help to take our health care system into the 21st century, providing more American families with the health care they need to thrive, maintaining the fiscal responsibility that is giving more Americans the chance to live out their dreams, shaping our most enduring values to meet the needs of changing times. It is the right thing to do. And thank you, Ruth, for demonstrating that to us today.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ruth Kain, a heart patient who was denied full health insurance coverage after her husband's retirement at age 65; and Representative Gerald D. Kleczka of Wisconsin.

### **Statement on the Death of Representative Sonny Bono**

*January 6, 1998*

Hillary and I were deeply saddened to learn this morning of the death of Representative Sonny Bono. His joyful entertainment of millions earned him celebrity, but in Washington he earned respect by being a witty and wise participant in policymaking processes that often seem ponderous to the American people. He made us laugh even as he brought his own astute perspective to the work of Congress. Hillary and I express our condolences to Representative Bono's wife and children and to his constituents and all Americans who appreciated his humor, his voice, and his devoted service to his community and Nation.

### **Remarks Announcing Proposed Legislation on Child Care**

*January 7, 1998*

Thank you very much. Welcome to the White House. You know, I was listening to the Vice President and Tipper and Hillary speak, and I was looking at all these people out here, and I was thinking about all the great joys of being President. And one of the greatest joys of being President is that you get to stand up and make an announcement on which other people have done all the work. *[Laughter]*

I want to begin by thanking the Cabinet, especially Secretary Shalala who has done so much work on this. But I thank them all. I thank the Congress, not only the Women's Caucus of Republican and Democratic women in the Congress but the few errant men who are here—*[laughter]*—and those who are not here who care so passionately about this issue in the Senate and in the House.

I thank the children and families who are here and the child advocates who are here. I was looking around this room—there are some people in this room that I have been listening to on this issue for way over 20 years now. They have waited a long time for this day. *[Laughter]*

I thank the Gores. You know, they started their family conference every year in Nashville even before we began our partnership together, and it was a brilliant and unique idea, the idea of every year focusing on the American family and some aspect of challenge or opportunity and bringing people in from all over America to talk about it. There's really no precedent for it as far as I know in our public policy, and it's a remarkable contribution that they have made.

And of course, I thank my wife, who has been talking to me about all these things for more than 25 years now and is sitting there thinking that I finally got around to doing what she has been telling me to do. *[Laughter]* I was thinking it would be nice to have something new to talk about for the next 25 years. *[Laughter]* That's one of the major reasons for this event today. And even if the rest of you can't appreciate it as much as I