

Patients' Bill of Rights

Q. Mr. President, on the question of where patients could go to hold HMOs accountable if they're wrongfully denied coverage, Democrats say that Federal court, your preferred venue is too slow, too expensive, and frequently too far away from where people live. Why are you so adamant about keeping people out of their own State courts?

The President. Terry, I think if you look at this piece of legislation, you'll find there's a compromise between those who say it should only be in the Federal court and those who say it should only be in the State court. And the Fletcher bill has come up with an alternative procedure, one that will allow a certain cause of action to be in the Federal court and other cause of action to be in a State court. And it's the right approach. It's a good compromise between two positions.

Q. But what's wrong with Federal court?

The President. Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg Radio].

Bipartisanship/Stem Cell Research

Q. Mr. President, a two part question. Around the table here today you have all—only Republicans. Do you plan talks like this with the Democratic leaders in the House and the Senate, talks about Patients' Bill of Rights? And related to that, how close are you on a decision on stem cell research, and can you tell us which way you're leaning?

The President. I'll make a decision about that very emotional issue later on. In terms of whether I've talked to Democrats, of course I do. And there's a Democrat sponsor of this bill. He doesn't happen to be at the table, but he's on the right track, as far as I'm concerned, like the other sponsors of this bill.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:33 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Statement on Patients' Bill of Rights Legislation

June 27, 2001

The bipartisan proposal introduced today by Representatives Ernie Fletcher, Collin Peterson, Nancy Johnson, and Richard Burr,

along with Speaker Hastert and the chairmen of the three committees with jurisdiction, Chairmen Boehner, Tauzin, and Thomas, makes progress in our effort to provide patients with a strong and enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights.

This proposal, like the legislation introduced by Senators Frist, Breaux, and Jeffords, is another example of a Patients' Bill of Rights that reflects the principles I laid out earlier this year. I am encouraged that the bill introduced today brings us significantly closer to enacting a good Patients' Bill of Rights.

This legislation provides strong patient protections to all Americans. It ensures that patients have the right to an independent medical review when they have been denied medical care, and it holds health plans accountable by providing patients with meaningful, effective remedies when they have been harmed by a denial or delay in receiving such care.

I am committed to providing patients with expanded remedies to hold their health plans accountable and believe we can do so while protecting workers and their families from costly litigation that would increase health care premiums and leave too many Americans without health insurance. This legislation introduced today provides patients with meaningful remedies while preserving uniformity and certainty for employers who voluntarily offer health care benefits for millions of Americans across the country.

Remarks at the President's Dinner

June 27, 2001

Thank you all. Please be seated. Mr. Vice President, 11 months ago I made the smartest decision I could make when it came to politics. I picked you to become the Vice President. What a good man this guy is, and what a great job he's done for America.

I think you're the one over there with the light shining off your head. [Laughter] Oh yes, there you are. But I do know you're sitting next to a fabulous woman. Lynne Cheney is a great friend of Laura and mine, and we're real proud that she is a part of our team, as well.

Speaking about Laura, I can't tell you how proud I am of the job she's doing on behalf of the citizens of America. She is not only a fantastic mother and wife but a truly wonderful First Lady for America. We would like to stay for dinner, but we've got to go home and feed Barney the dog. [*Laughter*]

I'm really proud to be here at what used to be called the House-Senate Dinner. And I'm glad to have something to do with the name change. [*Laughter*] But this name—the dinner's name wouldn't have changed without the help of a lot of people in this room. And I want to thank you and the American people for giving me a chance to be the President of the greatest Nation on the face of the Earth.

I want to thank Roger Enrico for his hard work. I want to thank Tommy Loeffler and George Allen and Jim McCrery, as well. I want to thank my friends, the Speaker of the House and soon-to-be majority leader of the Senate, Speaker Hastert and Trent Lott. It is such a pleasure to be able to work with two men to try to do what's right for America. And I want to thank you all for coming. Make no mistake about it, this dinner has one goal in mind, to make sure Denny Hastert remains the Speaker of the House and to make sure Trent Lott is the majority leader of the United States Senate. And we've got a reason why.

This just isn't politics. There's a reason why we need to make sure we remain strong in the Senate—and I want to thank the Senators who are here tonight—and the reason why we need to remain strong in the House—and I want to thank the House Members who are here tonight—and the reason why is because we have an agenda that is positive for America. We have a philosophy that is conservative and compassionate. Ours is a party that stands on principle, and ours is a party that's getting things done for the American people.

You know, there's a lot of talk in this town—people like to hold press conferences; people like to call people names. Well, what I like to do is to point out that when we work together, we can make some serious progress on behalf of the American people.

Take tax reform. Gosh, I remember in the campaign—Dick will tell you—when we

used to talk about tax reform, and there would be a collective yawn by the people that made the news. Our opponents said it was a foolhardy effort. But as a result of working together, and as a result of listening to the American people, I was able to sign in the White House, in record time, the first broadbased tax relief in a generation.

It would not have happened had the Speaker and the leader and Members of the Senate and House been willing to work together to do what's right for America. And what's right for America at this point in history is to trust the people with their own money. What was right for America is to understand these projected surpluses were not the Government's money; it was the people's money. And we've got to trust the people with their own money.

We worked together to put a plan out that was fair. Gosh, I remember all the old, tired talk in Washington about targeted tax relief. It meant that a handful of people got to decide who the winners and losers were in the Tax Code. We didn't think that was fair. We came with the simple principle that, if we were going to have tax relief, everybody in America who paid taxes ought to get tax relief. And so the bill I signed reduced all taxes on every taxpayer in America.

We recognized the marriage penalty was unfair. After all, what kind of Tax Code is it that penalizes marriage? Ours is a party that stands for strong families in America. And so we did something about the marriage penalty, and we did away with the death tax in the Tax Code.

Ours was a plan based upon principles. The role of Government is not to create wealth; the role of Government is to create an environment in which the small business can grow or the entrepreneur can flourish. Tax relief sent a clear message that we understand the role of capital in our society, and we want to provide capital for small-business owners regardless of their background, regardless of where they're from, because the American Dream is really about owning something.

And to the entrepreneurs all across the country, we say loud and clear, we understand what you're going through, and we want to stand side by side with you. Tax relief

was principled, in that it said, we trust the people of America. We said loud and clear, when it came to budgeting, we would budget a fair amount of money for the Federal Government; we'd meet the basics, which we did. But with any money left over, we wanted the American people to have the right to spend their own money. You see, we trust the people of America. We'd rather the American people be making decisions for their families, as opposed to the Federal Government.

We also had a plan that was necessary at this point in our economic history. Oh, you're hearing all kinds of second-guessing now about the tax relief plan. But what you can't second-guess is that our economy has slowed down. And one of our jobs—the Vice President's and my job is to solve problems. And a way to handle an economic slowdown is through good, sound fiscal policy and by passing money back to people this summer through tax rebates. And by reducing the rates on everybody who pays taxes, we've sent a clear message to entrepreneurs and capital and workers all around the country: We're going to do something about the economic slowdown. Tax relief is important to provide second wind for the economic growth of the United States of America. I want to remind people it was conservative to cut taxes, but it was compassionate, as well.

I remember traveling our country endlessly, seeking the vote. And nearly every stop, there were people there that were tax families, hard-working Americans who were struggling to get ahead, people who were trying to cope with their high energy bills or trying to get out from underneath their credit card debt, moms and dads who were hoping for a bright future for their children. I can remember looking in the eyes of our fellow citizens at every stop and saying to myself, I can't wait to go to Washington and to work with Congress to pass money back, so these good folks have got more of their hard-earned dollars to spend on their families.

Tax families made a huge impact on me as I campaigned across the country. I can't wait to get on the phone and see whether or not they like their tax rebate check when they start getting them this summer. I suspect they will.

And I remember traveling our country to hundreds of classrooms all across America, as well, and meeting dedicated teachers. And one of the things Laura is doing is, she's traveling the Nation recruiting youngsters and people who have just gotten out of the military to become a teacher. We need more teachers in America. We need to thank our teachers all across our land.

But we've also got to make sure we have an education system that's focused on results, an education system that holds up every child, an education system that believes every child can learn. And so we worked with the United States Congress to pass meaningful, real education reform. It's a reform package that says not only should we set high standards, but we ought to trust local people to chart the path for excellence for every single child. It's an education plan that focuses on each individual by insisting that school districts and States measure, so that we know. The old way used to say, "How old are you? And if you're 10, we'll put you in the fourth grade, and if you're 12, we'll move you here, and if you're 14, gosh, you're supposed to be here." But once we get this bill out of the Senate and the House conference committees and on my desk, America will start to ask the question, "What do you know?" And if you don't know what you're supposed to know, we'll make sure you do, early, before it's too late. There are no second-rate children in America, as far as we're concerned, and there are no second-rate dreams.

Mine is a job that will leave us with vivid memories and great experiences. There's no vivid a memory than I had when the EP-3 crew came to the White House. They were all dressed in their sparkling whites. They were proud to be Americans, and I was proud to welcome them to the most sacred office in our land. I was really proud to be able to tell the pilot what a fantastic job he did of taking a damaged aircraft and saving the lives of his crewmembers.

Whether it be greeting the EP-3 crew or inspecting the troops as Commander in Chief, I'm reminded of what one of my principal jobs is, and to make sure the world is a more peaceful place. And we believe it starts with having a military that's properly paid, properly housed, and properly trained:

prepared to fight and win war and, therefore, prevent war from happening in the first place.

Today I submitted up to Congress an amendment to the 2002 budget, which will increase military spending by 32.6 billion over the 2001 budget. It is my administration's commitment to a strong national defense. And at the same time, I'm proud of my Secretary of Defense's review of our military, to make sure that we're focused and make sure that taxpayers' dollars go into weapons systems that will be needed to keep the peace as we head into the 21st century.

I had the honor of representing our Nation recently in Europe, where I had a chance to explain what it meant to develop new weapons systems to keep the peace. Perhaps the most meaningful discussion I had was in a beautiful country called Slovenia. You ought to go there sometime. It is picturesque. I told the President I'd put a plug in for him. [*Laughter*] It is unbelievably beautiful country. And there I had the honor of meeting President Putin of Russia.

It was a fascinating discussion. I explained to him that ours was a peaceful nation. We didn't view Russia as an enemy. Mine is an administration that wants to discard the old way of thinking that took place during the cold war. In the old days, peace was achieved by figuring out how many weapons we could point at each other. But I explained to President Putin, Russia is no longer the threat. The threat to Russia or the threat to the United States or the threat to freedom-loving people will come as a result of a leader of a rogue nation having weapons of mass destruction. And therefore, to keep the peace, we must think differently.

I explained to him that history, past history was no longer relevant to the future, that two young leaders should seize the moment and make the world more peaceful by discarding that part of the ABM Treaty that prevents the United States from doing the research and development necessary to deploy effective antiballistic missile systems to keep the peace.

And it's been my honor to travel our country and to see the great acts of compassion that take place every single day, without one Government law telling people what to do.

I remember going to Tampa, Florida, for a Habitat for Humanity building site. I had the privilege of raising the wall. For those of you who have built a Habitat For Humanity home, you know the great pride you have when you nail a bunch a nails and not hit your finger—[*laughter*]—and then stand side by side with good, decent citizens, including the homeowner, to raise the wall. It was such a meaningful moment, because it reminded me about the great strength of America. And the great strength of America is America's people.

Ours is a compassionate land, a decent land, a land where people are motivated by good will, good heart, and strong faith. And so one of the most important initiatives that we're are discussing in the Halls of the United States Congress is an initiative which will gather the true strength of America, a faith-based initiative that says there are people in America who suffer; they suffer from want and need; they suffer from love and compassion. It makes sense for our country to welcome community and faith-based groups into the compassionate delivery of care and help if we want the American Dream to extend its reach throughout every neighborhood in America.

One of my favorite stories is an old story about a grandfather and his grandson walking along a beach that was chock-full of starfish. And the young boy picked one of them up and threw it in the ocean. And the grandfather, looking down the beach, seeing all the starfish, said, "That's not going to make any difference." And the young boy looked at his grandfather and said, "It makes a difference to that one." And that's how you change America—one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.

And we can also change America, for those of us fortunate enough to hold positions of responsibility, by setting good examples, by working hard to usher in a period of personal responsibility. We must reject the old cultures which said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it; and if you've got a problem, blame somebody else." Ours is a group of citizens caring about America who want to work together to usher in a period of personal responsibility, a period where the moms and dads of America understand our

most important job will be to love our children with all our hearts and all our souls, a period when each of us must turn to a neighbor in need and say, “What can we do to help?”—a period of time when those of us who have been elected to office understand the high responsibilities of the offices to which we have been elected.

I welcome a cultural shift in America. I’m going to work hard to call all those who care about our Nation to join me in changing the culture and join me in ushering in a period of personal responsibility. And I want you to know that assuming the responsibility of President is a high honor, an honor I hold dearly, an honor I hold sacred, and an honor I will not abrogate to the American people.

Thank you for coming tonight, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:30 p.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Roger A. Enrico, vice chairman of the board, PepsiCo., Inc.; Tom Loeffler, vice chairman of regents, University of Texas at San Antonio; U.S. Navy pilot Lt. Shane Osborn, USN; President Milan Kucan of Slovenia; President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report of the Federal Labor Relations Authority

June 27, 2001

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with section 701 of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (Public Law 95–454; 5 U.S.C. 7104(e)), I transmit herewith to you the Twenty-second Annual Report of the Federal Labor Relations Authority for Fiscal Year 2000.

George W. Bush

The White House,
June 27, 2001.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 28.

Remarks to Department of Energy Employees

June 28, 2001

Thank you very much. Okay. Conserve your energy. [*Laughter*] That’s the message I’m sending to Congress today, in a comprehensive energy strategy. On the one hand, it says we must be wiser about how we develop and increase supply, and on the other hand, it says we must be wiser about how we conserve energy.

Our Nation must have a strategy, a broad, comprehensive energy strategy that calls upon the best of the Nation’s entrepreneurs to help us develop the technologies necessary to make wise choices in the marketplace, as well as calls upon our Nation’s innovative technologies to help us find new sources of energy. And the plan I submitted to Congress today does just that.

Mr. Secretary, I appreciate your leadership. He’s a man of high energy and good wisdom. And I picked the right man to lead the Energy Department for the country. I want to thank all the hard-working folks here at the Department of Energy and those around the country who are dedicating your lives to making America a better place.

I want to thank the United States Congressman who came. George, thank you very much for being here. He’s from the great State of California. As you know, California has an energy issue, and the people of our country and the people of California must understand that the Federal Government has stood side by side with the people of California, working to alleviate the situation there.

We’ve expedited the ability for California to build new powerplants. We’ve reduced the regulatory burdens and hurdles to encourage the increase of supply into a State in which no powerplant had been built for over a decade. And yesterday I was pleased to see—and the Governor inaugurated a new powerplant in Chino, California—the beginnings of what is a rational energy policy that will help the good people of California get out from underneath 10 years of neglect.

Secondly, the Federal Government made a strong commitment, led by Spence