And we should spare families the hardship of separation while one member is awaiting a green card. I support providing an extension of the temporary window that allows people to file for legal residency without having to return to their country of origin. And I urge the Members of the United States Congress to act swiftly on 245(i) reform.

In the life of an immigrant, citizenship is a defining event. In the life of our Nation, new citizens bring renewal. By taking an oath, as you have done today, immigrants affirm a belief in the American creed. For most Americans, there's no formal moment of affirmation, but to each of us fall the same responsibilities. Our democracy's sustained by the moral commitments we share: reverence for justice and obedience to the law, tolerance and decent respect for the opinions of others, responsibility not only to ourselves but for our families and neighborhoods, love of country shown not in prideful boasts but in modest gratitude, and an active concern for our Nation's future.

That future depends on the values of self-government, our sense of duty, loyalty, self-confidence, and regard for the common good. We're a diverse country and getting more diverse. And these virtues are what keeps this great country together. Believing in them and living by them, this great land will always be united.

When they left behind the old world, the millions who landed here at Ellis Island came with a vision of a better life. They sought more than economic opportunity, though that was surely part of it. They wanted more than political freedom, though that was crucial. Above all, they wanted the rights, the duties, and the dignity of American citizenship. This place is now a museum, but it stands for a living tradition. And on Ellis Island today, the great hope of America is renewed.

Since becoming the President, I've gotten to do a lot of really fascinating things. There's nothing like—quite like the event this morning. So will you please join me, and rise, as we say the Pledge of Allegiance.

Right hand up, please. Actually, right hand on your heart. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, the President led the participants in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.*]

Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:55 a.m. in the Registry Room. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. George E. Pataki of New York; Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani of New York City; and singer Silvia Sanchez.

Remarks on the Posthumous Presentation of the Congressional Gold Medal to John Cardinal O'Connor in New York City

July 10, 2000

Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your Eminence; Governor Pataki and Mrs. Pataki; Mayor Giuliani. I want to thank Chuck Schumer and Vito Fossella for such beautiful words. Senator Clinton; distinguished Members of the United States Congress; members of my Cabinet; Mary Ward, Dorothy Hamilton, and members of the O'Connor family; Reverend Ogilvie and Father Coughlin; leaders of the Catholic Church; Maureen O'Flynn, thank you for sharing your angelic voice with us today. My fellow Americans.

Thank you for the welcome to your city and to the seat of this archdiocese. I especially want to thank the police and fire departments for their presentation of the colors and their service to this community.

John Cardinal O'Connor was fond of recalling the greeting he received when visiting the Vatican. Pope John Paul II would meet him with these words: "How is the Archbishop of the capital of the world?" For me, on my first visit as President, it's a pleasure, Mr. Mayor, to be in the capital of the world.

This is a happier occasion than the day when we said our goodbyes at a solemn Mass in a mourning city. It takes a lot to bring all of New York to a pause, but that's what happened when the earthly remains of John Cardinal O'Connor were laid to rest in this beautiful cathedral.

From the distance of a year, his character and his contributions only seem larger. We remember a life of good works, strong faith, and great influence.

For many here today, those memories are still vivid and very personal. For parishioners, it may be the memory of an imposing figure who stood here so many times, looking every

inch a cardinal, fearing, it seemed, nothing and having an opinion, it seemed, on everything.

For thousands of veterans, it's the memory of a chaplain who counseled them, heard their confessions, and attained the rank of admiral. For the working men and women, it will be the memory of an advocate, someone who rose to great prominence but remained the proud son of a union man who honored hard work.

The poor and immigrants of this city will always remember their staunch friend who defended their interests and understood their struggles. Many families remember the church leader who came to AIDS patients with care and love.

Parents here and in Scranton will remember the priest who gave so much time and special care to boys and girls with disabilities. And the world will remember the gallant defender of children and their vulnerability, innocence, and their right to be born.

Many decades from now, these living memories of the man will begin to pass. Fewer and fewer will have known the sound of his voice, the largeness of his presence, the sting of his rebuke, his marvelous sense of humor, or the breadth of his compassion. But future generations will know at least this about the 11th leader of the archdiocese: He was a man who left a mark on his time; a moral leader not only in title but in truth; a defender of the faith, the very kind who have kept the faith alive for two millennia; a great man in a high place; and also for 80 years on this Earth, a good person, a cheerful giver, and a much-loved soul.

Posterity will know this: The Congress of the United States, in respect and gratitude, directed that a gold medal be struck bearing Cardinal O'Connor's name and image. And on this day, on behalf of the American people, I'm honored to present the Congressional Gold Medal to the family and to the successor of John Cardinal O'Connor.

God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:42 p.m. at St. Patrick's Cathedral. In his remarks, he referred to His Eminence Edward Cardinal Egan, Archbishop of New York and successor to Cardinal O'Connor; Gov. George E. Pataki of New York and his wife, Elizabeth; Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani of New York City; Mary Ward and Dorothy Hamilton, sisters of Cardinal O'Connor; Rev. Lloyd J. Ogilvie, Chaplain, U.S. Senate; Rev. Daniel P. Coughlin, Chaplain, U.S. House of Representatives; and opera singer Maureen O'Flynn.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Medical Organization Leaders

July 11, 2001

Thank you. Be seated, please. Dr. Perry, thank you very much. It's great to welcome you up from Monroe, Louisiana. Mr. Secretary—Madame Secretary, thank you all for being here. It's good to see Members of the United States Congress; thank you all for coming; my fellow Americans.

We've just come from a great meeting with leaders of medical organizations that represent over 300,000 doctors—specialists, men and women from around our country who are deeply concerned about the state of the practice of medicine, health care professionals that care deeply about not only the practice of medicine but, more importantly, the patients that they see, men and women whose whole life is aimed at improving the lives of their fellow citizens, as a result of their brilliant skills. We had a frank discussion about medicine today and where medicine is headed. And we share a concern that many patients are not receiving the quality of care that we would hope they would receive.

And so we're now debating this issue in Congress, how best to improve the quality of care without unnecessarily running up the cost of medicine, without encouraging more lawsuits, which will eventually cause people not to be able to have health insurance.

And there's a good alternative working through the House of Representatives that my administration supports. It's called the Fletcher bill. It's a piece of legislation which says that patients ought to have direct access to specialists. These men and women who represent specialists all across America embrace this bill, the bill that my administration supports, because of direct access to specialists. And that's important. It's a very important part of the legislation.

I know there's some talk that the bill that came out of the Senate is the only one that