

**Remarks Announcing the  
Nominations of Dr. Elias Zerhouni  
To Be Director of the National  
Institutes of Health and Dr. Richard  
Carmona To Be Surgeon General**

*March 26, 2002*

Well, thank you, Tommy, very much, and welcome to the White House for this historic announcement. I appreciate your leadership, Tommy, in leading this administration's strong efforts to improve our Nation's health care, to make sure that more Americans get affordable health care, better patient protections, that the system puts our patients first, the system understands the importance of our docs, and we value that relationship, patient and doctor.

I also want to assure our fellow Americans that we're going to make and are making an unprecedented commitment to medical research. And we're improving our public health system to make sure that we can respond quickly to any biological threat that our country may face. We're putting sound health care policies in place and, as importantly, putting a quality team in place. And that's what we're here to discuss today.

It's my honor to nominate two fine men to head important Government institutions, to take important jobs. My nominee to lead the National Institute of Health is Elias Zerhouni, and my nominee as the next Surgeon General is Richard Carmona. These are distinguished physicians who have worked tirelessly to save lives and to improve lives. They bring exceptional knowledge and skill to these critical jobs. And they are absolutely dedicated to improving the health and well-being of all Americans.

It is my honor to welcome their families here as well. Thank you all for coming, Nadia Zerhouni and her children, and Diane Carmona and her children. We welcome you all, and we're glad you're here. I want to thank the Acting NIH Director, Ruth Kirschstein, for being here as well. Where are you, Ruth? There you are. Thank you so much, Ruth, for a fine job. I appreciate the Acting Surgeon General. Ken, where are you? Ken, thank you for being here, and thank you for your fine job as well.

I want to thank the former NIH Director, Harold Varmus, for being here. Antonia Novello is here. Thank you, Antonia. I remember you. [Laughter] She was a former Surgeon General under "41." [Laughter] And I'm so pleased that former House Minority Leader Bob Michel, former Senator Dennis DeConcini of Arizona, former Congressman John Porter, as well, from Illinois, is here. Thank you all for coming. We're honored you're here. And I also want to thank the Ambassador from Algeria for being here as well. Thank you all for coming.

The National Institutes of Health is entering a new era of medical promise. NIH researchers recently cracked the genetic code, an amazing achievement with enormous potential benefits. New diagnostic tools are alerting patients when they have an elevated risk of certain diseases, so they can take an active role in preventing them. New treatment therapies will be tailor-made for an individual's genetic makeup. And many medical treatments will become less invasive. American medicine is on the verge of dramatic progress against AIDS, against diabetes, and against heart disease. We're closing in on cancer's cause and cancer's cure.

The anthrax attacks against American citizens also demonstrated the need to strengthen our defenses against bioterrorism. Medical research will improve our ability to identify and respond and treat infectious diseases, whether they occur naturally or are used as terrorist weapons. The NIH has taken a leading role in this important front on the war against terror. The work of the National Institutes of Health have never been more promising and never been more important.

Leading the NIH is a great responsibility, and I have picked the right man to do so. Dr. Zerhouni and his wife immigrated to America from Algeria with \$300 in their pocket, but a dream of opportunity. Today, he is the executive vice dean of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, the chairman of the department of radiology and radiological science at Johns Hopkins, and a professor of radiology and biomedical engineering. He is an expert in biomedical research and is committed to extending his benefits to all Americans and all humanity.

Dr. Zerhouni will also bring strong management skills to the NIH, and they are needed. This is a large and complex organization. The NIH budget has grown dramatically from around \$2 billion in 1975 to more than \$23 billion today. And my 2003 budget proposes an additional increase of nearly \$4 billion. I urge Congress to approve this increase, and when they do, we will have completed my campaign commitment to double funding to this vital medical research over the next 5 years. Dr. Zerhouni is well prepared to manage this rapidly growing institution during times of great new opportunity and urgent biodefense needs. He has supervised research at Johns Hopkins, one of our Nation's leading research facilities. One former colleague calls him a quadruple threat: a doctor who excels at teaching, researching, patient care, and management.

Dr. Zerhouni shares my view that human life is precious and should not be exploited or destroyed for the benefits of others. And he shares my view that the promise of ethically conducted medical research is limitless. As Director of the NIH, Dr. Zerhouni will be at the forefront of our efforts to promote biomedical research with a careful regard for the bounds of medical ethics.

Dr. Zerhouni, thank you for accepting this incredibly exciting challenge.

Translating medical research into practical life-improving changes is a critical function of the Surgeon General. Since 1871, the Surgeon General has been America's chief health educator, giving Americans the best, most up-to-date knowledge on how to improve their health and reduce the risk of disease.

When I first learned that Dr. Richard Carmona once dangled out of a moving helicopter, I worried that maybe he wasn't the best guy to educate our Americans about reducing health risks. [Laughter] But that turned out to be just one of several times that Dr. Carmona risked his own life to save others. As an Army Green Beret in Vietnam, a decorated police officer in Pima County, Arizona, a SWAT team member, a nurse, and a physician, Dr. Carmona has redefined the term "hands-on medicine."

Dr. Carmona currently serves as the clinical professor of surgery and clinical assistant

professor of family and community medicine at the University of Arizona. He is also the chairman of the State of Arizona Southern Regional Emergency Medical System. He will bring to the Surgeon General's Office a proven commitment to service and a strong management background.

The next Surgeon General will address three particularly urgent issues. First, the Surgeon General administers the 5,600-member Public Health Service Commission Corps, health care professionals who are on call for emergency duty. Members of this force were deployed in New York and Washington, DC, after the terrorist attacks of September the 11th and during the anthrax attacks that followed. Dr. Carmona has worked for many years in law enforcement and community preparedness, important preparation for any emergency that may come. Dr. Carmona is an experienced voice to help educate Americans about the best precautions and response to the threat of bioterrorism.

Second, I have asked Dr. Carmona to lead an important initiative focusing on prevention and lifelong healthy living as a key component to medical care. The research is overwhelming that simple improvements in diet and exercise would result in dramatic improvements in America's health. Studies show that overweight Americans who are at risk of developing type II diabetes or coronary heart disease can delay and possibly prevent these diseases with just moderate exercise and a healthy diet. Walking 30 minutes a day will dramatically improve your life. Playing a game with your children in your backyard will help. Walking in a park can make a difference to your health. These relatively small actions can dramatically reduce costs and strain on our health care system.

Fitness and a healthy lifestyle are a priority for me. I really like to run. It makes me feel better. The doc and I are going to encourage all our country to either run or walk or swim or bicycle for the good of their families, for the good of their own health, and for the good of the health of the Nation.

And thirdly, Dr. Carmona is going to speak regularly to the Nation about alcohol and drug abuse and the tremendous toll they take on our society. Substance abuse by students

undermines academic achievement and dims the great hope of the American Dream. Alcohol is a prime cause for many of our society's ills, not the least of which is domestic violence. And the long-term health effects of alcohol and drug abuse are devastating. If we want to live healthier and longer, we're going to have to tackle the problems of alcohol and drug abuse. And Dr. Carmona's going to make that one of his priorities.

Doctor, I thank you so very much for your willingness to serve our country.

I have found two fine Americans who are willing to serve our Nation, and I'm grateful for their service. It is now my honor to welcome to the podium Dr. Zerhouni, the nominee to run our National Institute of Health.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:47 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy G. Thompson; Nadia Zerhouni, wife of Elias Zerhouni, and their children, Will, Yasmin, and Adam; Diana Carmona, wife of Richard Carmona; and Idriss Jazairy, Algerian Ambassador to the United States.

### Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters in Greenville, South Carolina

March 27, 2002

#### *President's Visit*

**The President.** I'm looking forward to getting down to Texas. But first, I'm really looking forward to campaigning here in South Carolina for Lindsey Graham. And I'm looking forward to making some announcements about homeland security, both in South Carolina and in Georgia. And then I'm going on from there to help my friend Saxby Chambliss. Then I'll be heading home to-night.

It's good to be back in South Carolina. I've got a lot of friends down here, and it's always good to stay in touch with your friends.

#### *Campaign Finance Reform*

**Q.** On campaign finance——

**The President.** Yes, I signed the bill this morning.

**Q.** But without much fanfare—a signal that you're really unhappy with it?

**The President.** No, I wouldn't have signed it if I was really unhappy with it. I think it improves the system. And it improves the system because it enables an individual to give more money. And I want to do—is have a system that encourages more individual participation as well as more disclosure.

I've always been concerned about a system where money is given to entities and stakeholders have no say. So I was concerned about shareholders of corporate America not having a say, as well as labor union members not having a say about how their money is being spent. This bill improves the system.

**Q.** Mr. President, the objection you raised in the last week of debate on the bill is that it didn't take effect immediately, the ban on soft money would not take effect until after the election. Do you find it ironic that given that that was your opposition, today, right after signing the bill, you're out raising——

**The President.** I'm not going to lay down my arms. I'm going to participate in the rules of the system. The Senate races are very important for me. I want the Republicans to take control of the Senate, and I want Denny Hastert to be the Speaker of the House. And these are the rules. And that's why I'm going to campaign for like-minded people.

#### *Situation in the Middle East*

**Q.** Do you have any plans to talk to Prime Minister Sharon?

**The President.** I don't today. I'm sure the Secretary of State is in touch in the area, with the leaders of the area. But let me say this—and I think the important thing about the Middle East is that we're making very good progress on the Tenet accord. In other words, there's a chance we'll have an agreement on the security arrangements necessary to hopefully then get into Mitchell.

General Zinni is still in the area. Let me put it this way: I'm optimistic that progress is being made. And I've asked General Zinni