

The President. Thank you very much.

Senator Feinstein, Senator Boxer?

Senator Feinstein. Good morning, Mr. President. How are you?

The President. I'm fine.

[*Senator Feinstein described the mobilization and organization of State firefighting strike teams and Firescope, a unified command of Federal, State, and local authorities to deal with the disaster.*]

The President. Thank you. Thank you, Senator.

James Lee, I think you and Mike——

Senator Boxer. Do you have room for one more Senator?

The President. Yes. I'm going to call in just a minute. I just wanted to say to James Lee and Mike Espy, I think you ought to make a recommendation to me on what we should do on this unified command issue after you get back.

Senator Boxer, the floor is yours.

[*Senator Boxer described the devastation, commended FEMA for its response to the disaster, and expressed her thanks to the President.*]

The President. Thank you, Senator. I want to thank both the Senators. And, Dick Andrews, I thank you, and through you Governor Wilson,

you tell him that if there's anything else we can do, you just pick up the phone and call.

And, to Roger Johnson and Secretary Espy and to James Lee Witt, I thank you all for your quick response, and I can't wait to talk to you some more in person after the fire dies down some more and we make sure that we don't forget them when the fire's gone. We'll be there for the followup.

I thank you all, and I hope you have a good day and keep those winds away out there. Thank you. Goodbye.

[*At this point, the teleconference ended.*]

Q. Are you going to California?

The President. I don't know that yet. We're going to monitor the winds today. That's the big issue. I don't want to be in the way out there. They've got a lot of work to do. The thing, I think, is pretty well in hand now if they don't have a resurgence of the winds. So we're all basically going to—it's quite early there, it's still 7 a.m. in the morning. And we're just going to spend the next 4 or 5 hours waiting for the weather reports.

I've got to do the radio address, folks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:45 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House. A portion of this item could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

The President's Radio Address

October 30, 1993

Good morning. In the next few days, you'll have the chance to pick up what may be the most important book of information you'll read for yourself, your children, your parents, and others you care about. It's a book that's also very important for the future of our Nation. The book is called "Health Security: The President's Report to the American People." And while it deals with a very complex issue, the overhaul and reform of our health care system, it does so in straightforward, very human terms.

The book describes our plan to solve the Nation's health care crisis by guaranteeing every working American comprehensive health care that's always there, that can never be taken away. While many people worked hard on this

book, especially the First Lady and her task force on health care reform, in many ways, the book was written by you, the American people. For a long time, since I was the Governor of my State, I've been talking with Americans who, against their will, become all too familiar with the failings of our health care system, Americans caught without insurance or with inadequate insurance when they or a loved one became ill and when they needed the coverage the most, people who had their bank accounts emptied, their trust in the system betrayed, and too often their hearts broken.

Many of you listening today know someone who has fallen through the cracks of our health care system. These cracks have become chasms

that swallow hard-working Americans. More than 37 million Americans don't have health insurance at all, and 25 million more have very inadequate coverage with very high deductibles. Every month, 100,000 Americans lose their health coverage permanently.

Who are these people caught in this broken system? They are a working mother with a sick child who had to buy her own insurance and who, every month, must ask herself, "Do I pay the rent or the medical bills?"; a seventh grade teacher with breast cancer whose insurance provider disagreed with doctors over her care, the teacher had to run herself into debt to pay for her own chemotherapy; a doctor, frustrated by miles of redtape and forms that steal time he should have with his patients.

These stories are not unique. Here at the White House, Hillary and I have had over 700,000 letters about health care, and 10,000 more pour in every week. Every one of them is a cry for action. So now we have a plan for action. Our health security legislation is a detailed bill to provide comprehensive, universal coverage for our people. Of course, it's only fair to ask who pays and how much.

There's been some confusion on this, so today let me give it to you straight. Under our plan, 60 percent of all the American people will pay the same or less to get the same or better benefits. I'll repeat that: 6 out of 10 of all Americans, and even more as the reforms begin to take effect and cost increases go down, will pay the same or less for the same or better benefits.

About 25 percent of our people, people who are now underinsured or people without insurance at all who can afford to pay, will pay a little more for coverage. But many of them will actually pay less in medical bills. Right now, there are lots of people with cheap premiums, because their deductibles, their up-front costs are so high, \$2,500, \$3,000, even \$5,000. Under our plan, their premiums may be a little higher, but their out-of-pocket costs will be lower.

Finally, about 15 percent, and only 15 percent of the American people or their employers, will pay more for the same benefits. These are the young, healthy, usually single Americans whose insurance companies gamble under the current plan that they won't get sick. Is it fair to ask them to pay a little more so we can have broad-based community rating? I believe it is. Why?

Because there are lots of young people who can't get insurance at all, because all these younger people will be older themselves someday, with children, and they'll need this fair rate. And when these young people do get sick or have an accident, or even marry someone with a preexisting health condition, well then, all bets are off. The insurance company may double their rates or drop them altogether. With our plan, their premiums may be a little higher, just a few dollars a month, but they'll be guaranteed coverage no matter what happens, and a guarantee that rates won't rise unchecked.

That's another thing I want to emphasize. Under our plan, there is a limit to what anyone can have taken away from them in health care. That's not true today. So 100 percent of the American people get something no one has today, absolute security. This plan is based on the principles of security, simplicity, savings, maintaining the quality of our health care system, maintaining and even increasing choice for consumers of health care, and insisting on more responsibility.

We focus on keeping people healthy, not just treating them after they get sick. We reduce paperwork and crack down on fraud. We protect the right to choose doctors and preserve and strengthen Medicare.

Right now I'll say again: There is no guarantee for anyone that health care will be there tomorrow. One of our citizens wrote us and said even employed insured people are one major illness away from financial disaster.

Before the end of the year, I want our lawmakers to pass a bill to guarantee health security for every American. That's the end of the congressional session next year. And I want to be clear on this. We'll debate many points of this plan, but this point must remain nonnegotiable: The health care plan must guarantee every American a comprehensive package of benefits that can never be taken away. And I will only sign a bill into law that meets that fundamental commitment to the American people. We have delayed making good on it for too long.

Our lawmakers have a big job ahead, but they won't be alone. We've seen extraordinary support from both parties to reform health care. And I promise to work with Congress every step of the way. As a responsible citizen, you have a job, too. Learn all you can about this

plan. Start with a book called "Health Security," and join the debate.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Statement on the Peace Process in Northern Ireland

October 30, 1993

I welcome the efforts of Irish Prime Minister Albert Reynolds and British Prime Minister John Major to reinvigorate the negotiations for peace in Northern Ireland. I join their condemnation of the use of violence for political ends and strongly support their commitment to restart talks among their two Governments and the four constitutional parties of Northern Ireland. Their joint statement issued yesterday in Brussels underscores their common resolve to work for peace, justice, and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. The United States stands ready to support this process in any appropriate way.

All friends of peace were outraged at the tragic and senseless IRA bombing in Belfast on October 23 and the ensuing violence. Especially in the wake of such action, we must redouble our efforts to reject violence and pursue the path of peace. As we remember the victims of the sectarian violence that has torn the region for too long, let us work together to ensure that the vision of the two Governments demonstrated in their joint statement bears lasting fruit.

Teleconference Remarks on NAFTA to the United States Chamber of Commerce

November 1, 1993

The President. Thank you very much. I'm delighted to see all of you here and to know that there are people all across the country watching this important event. I thank the chamber of commerce for organizing this and for providing the technology that makes it possible. I'm glad to see Governor Edgar of Illinois here. And I listened intently in the back room there to my former colleagues, Governor Wilson and Governor Weld, talk about NAFTA. I want to thank Dick Leshner and Ivan Gorr and Larry Bossidy for their work through USA[®]NAFTA and the chamber of commerce to help us pass this very important piece of legislation. And I think former Congressman Bill Frenzel, who's the cochair of our effort, is here somewhere. I want to thank him for making our bipartisan administration effort as successful as it's been.

I know that there are people all over the country here, but if you'll forgive me for a little bit of parochialism, I want to observe that there are 150 people from my home State of Arkansas listening at the Excelsior Hotel in Little Rock, where we had the economic summit last De-

cember, and one of our good employers I just shook hands with on the platform up here.

I say that to make this point: Any Governor will tell you that the job of being Governor today is the job of getting and keeping jobs and educating and training people to do them. That is the lion's share of the work, on a daily basis, of doing that job. For a dozen years, it was my job to try to deal with the pressures of global competition, the enormous economic difficulties of the 1980's. When plants closed, I knew people's names who ran the plants and worked in the plants. When people closed their plants and went to Mexico, I knew about them. And I was proud that of the three or four we lost when I was Governor, we actually brought one back before I left office. It made me feel that in part, we had squared the circle.

The point I want to make is this: Anybody who has ever dealt with these issues knows that most of the arguments being raised against NAFTA today are arguments being raised about