

May 9 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1994

national community, to end the assault on democracy and human dignity in Haiti.

I am providing this notice to the Congress pursuant to section 204(b) of the IEEPA (50 U.S.C. 1703(b)) and section 301 of the NEA (50 U.S.C. 1631). I am enclosing a copy of the Executive order that I have issued.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,

May 7, 1994.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 9. The Executive order and related proclamation of May 7 are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks to Pathmark Employees in New York City

May 9, 1994

Thank you so much, Jack. And I want to thank you and all of you here for hosting me today. I was beginning to tell a story. You know, the first job I ever had was working in a grocery store. I was 13 years old; I don't think I violated the child labor laws at the time. [*Laughter*] But anyway, I did. And so every time I come into a food store, I'm always so happy, and I look around to see how the merchandise is stacked and how it's organized and everything. And I remember how different it was when I started my career as a worker almost 35 years ago now.

I want to thank you for your support of this endeavor. I want to thank Senator Connor and my longtime friend, your borough president, Ruth Messenger, for being here today in support of this. I want to thank Doug Dority and the United Food and Commercial Workers for their support of health care reform and their intense efforts to educate the Congress about this.

I want to say again what this plastic bag says, and I want to emphasize why I'm here today, besides the fact that I was kind of hungry, driving in from the airport. [*Laughter*] That bag says: "Pathmark and the UFCW support health benefits at work and quality health care, including prescription medicines for all Americans." That just about says it all.

We're having this raging political struggle in Washington where everybody in the wide world says, "Oh, I believe every American ought to have access to health care, but we can't figure out how to do it." And the Members of Congress are being told day-in and day-out that all retail establishments and all small businesses oppose requiring employers and employees that don't have any health insurance at all now to

get coverage at work, with the employers paying a substantial and fair share of that. And the image they have now is that all retail establishments and all small businesses feel that way. We have now produced hundreds of small business people, men and women from all over America who say, "I want to insure my employees, but I can't afford to because my competitors don't have to do it. Please require us all to do it, and then give small business the same chance to buy that big business has."

Today, you see a major American retailer, 175 stores, a company that's proved that you can be socially responsible and still make money. You can provide health care to your employees, and you can put stores in the inner cities. And you can make money by treating people right, your customers and the people who work with you. That is the message today.

The truth is that if all retailers in the country had to provide insurance on equal terms to their employees, you would be advantaged, because no one would be able to get a competitive advantage over you by not covering their employees while you all are covered, and you bear that cost in common and the truth is that in the future, your health benefits could be purchased for a lower cost. That is, your costs wouldn't go up as much because today part of your cost is paying the bill for everybody who doesn't have coverage, because when they get sick, they get care. They show up at the emergency room when it's too late and too expensive, and then the cost is passed on to everybody in our society who is paying a fair share.

So this is a very, very important thing today. By being here, you are saying to me that you support health benefits at work. It works for

you, and it can work for America. I just want to point out that, today, 9 out of 10 Americans who have private insurance get their insurance at work. Eight out of 10 Americans who do not have health insurance are in working families. Therefore, the most conservative, the most practical, the most realistic way to cover all Americans is to say, if people are working, they should be covered at work, and their employers should bear a fair share of that cost, like most employers do. If people are not working, then the Government should figure out how to handle it.

Today, unless you're older, on Medicare, the only people with guaranteed health care in this country are people on welfare. Why should people on welfare have a guarantee that people that are working don't have? There are people all over this country who are on welfare who would quit and go to work, let's say for one of your competitors who doesn't provide health care, and lose health care benefits for their children.

Think of that: "Well, what's your story?" "Oh, I left welfare. I went to work at Food Store X. I don't have health care, but at least I'm working. Now I'm paying taxes so people who didn't go to work and stayed on welfare could get health care." You don't have to be a genius to figure out that doesn't make any sense. It is not fair. It is not right. It is not fair for your competitors to have any price advantage over you because they don't contribute to their employees' health care.

It's also not fair for people whose children are born with an illness or who develop an illness not to ever be able to get health insurance because they were never in a work unit that provided it. There are millions of people like that. So I just wanted to thank you for giving me a chance, through the press, to show America that there are plenty of businesses who support requiring employers to pay their fair share. Plenty of them. And you represent that. And the truth is this country would be a whole lot

better off if all the food stores in America did what you do instead of walking away. But unless everybody does it, it's going to be harder and harder and harder for you to do it. That's what Jack said, and it's absolutely right.

Let me say, I just saw Senator Moynihan walk in. Come over here, Senator Moynihan. Senator Moynihan, your Senator, is the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, which has the largest share of responsibility for the health care bill in the United States Senate. And he will tell you that the big battle that we're fighting out there is how to find a way to cover everybody.

You have proved that a retail establishment can cover their employees and make money, that by treating people right you get higher productivity, greater employee loyalty, more production, and in the end, higher profits. But it isn't right unless everybody has to do it.

So I want to ask you as I close, every time you fill up that bag, tell people you mean it. And ask them to call their Member of Congress or write them or drop them a note and say, this is important for America. If we don't now seize this opportunity to give health care security to all of our people, more and more people will start to lose insurance. Another 100,000 Americans a month lose their health insurance permanently. It is not right. We can do this right. It will save us money over the long run. We will be a healthier, stronger, happier, more coherent, more cohesive society if we do this. We have ignored this for 60 years. In 1994 we can do something about it if people like you will let your voices be heard.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:54 a.m. in the Pathmark supermarket at 227 Cherry St. in Manhattan. In his remarks, he referred to Jack Futterman, chairman and chief executive officer of Pathmark, and Doug Dority, international president, United Food and Commercial Workers.