

And what is it supposed to do, seen as a whole? What it's supposed to do seen as a whole is allow all people, all people, to live together in a society where they have so many different views, so many different needs, but to live together in a way that is more harmonious, that is better so that they can work productively together. That's a very general statement, but that is a very general purpose, I think, of law.

The President. It's hard to be better than that. Thank you. We're adjourned.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. I think we should let him speak for himself. I think we let him speak for himself. I don't think—if we do it right, there's not necessarily a dichotomy. We can't be free individually unless we're a responsible society. And I think he'll do very well on that.

Q. Mr. President, how do you feel about the critics over the weekend who said you caved into pressure from Senator Hatch?

The President. That's just not right.

Q. —said you're not willing to fight for someone you believe in, like Bruce Babbitt.

The President. That's just not right. I believe in this guy.

Q. Were you surprised by the Western Senators?

The President. No, we—[inaudible]—we could confirm all three of them. It was not an issue. I'll say again, that was not an issue. I realize these process things can—more than half the stories I read about this were wrong, and that's one of them.

Q. Which ones were wrong?

The President. [Inaudible]—we could have confirmed them all.

Q. What about the stories you saw on TV? [Laughter]

The President. They're always right. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:49 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks in a Video Conference Call on Health Care Reform May 16, 1994

The President. Hello, Roger.

Deputy Secretary Roger Altman. Hello, Mr. President. Good afternoon.

The President. Good afternoon.

[At this point, Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Roger Altman discussed technological advances in video conferencing and then introduced Norman Gott, chairman and chief executive of PictureTel, a company in that field which provides health care coverage to all its employees.]

Norman Gott. Thank you, Roger.

Good afternoon, Mr. President.

The President. Good afternoon, Norman.

Mr. Gott. We welcome you up here on, hopefully, technology that will help to carry us into the 21st century.

The President. It's carrying me through the afternoon. I'm amazed by this. [Laughter] I'm trying to figure out how to get it.

[Mr. Gott expressed his support for universal health care coverage through the workplace.]

The President. Well, I appreciate your support. You know, it is clear to me, having studied this problem for years and talked to literally hundreds of employers, that we're never going to get control of costs and have a fully efficient and effective system that is also compassionate and humane until we have guaranteed health insurance for everybody. We've got to cover everybody. And the simplest and most direct way is to do it through the workplace.

Now, as you know, all the bitter opposition we're getting here in Washington is coming from people who say it will cost jobs and it will hurt small business. But they overlook the fact that many small businesses provide health insurance today at very high rates because they don't have any market power. And under our plan, we'd have discounts for small businesses, and we'd give them market power. We would let them go into buyers co-ops so they would be able to have the same sort of muscle that larger companies do.

And over the long run, unless we do this, we're neither going to be a humane country, from a health care point of view, or as productive as we ought to be, and we're going to lose jobs. All these serious studies of the economy, such as the one done by the bipartisan Congressional Budget Office, say that we'll actually create more jobs and we'll help the small business sector over the long run as we put this universal coverage in.

So I can't tell you how much I appreciate this because the organized groups here in Washington are always complaining about this mandate as if it's the end of the world when, in fact, it's just private insurance for everybody. It keeps the Government out of it except to require people, employers and employees, to be responsible. And I really applaud what you said.

[Mr. Gott asked if there was any way business could assist the health care reform effort.]

The President. Absolutely, there is. I think the most important thing you can do is to contact as many Members of Congress of both parties as possible, describe your business, make it clear that you're a business of the future, and make it clear that the American economy in the future depends upon providing health care for all of our citizens and that the way to do it is through the workplace.

I think that if the Members of Congress could just see over and over and over again all the responsible employers who want to do the right thing and who understand that it's good for business and will create jobs to solve the health care crisis, I think that will do more than anything else to give them the courage to overcome the intense, almost unbelievable pressure from the organized groups who are basically trying to protect the right of business to walk away from their employees and their own responsibility so that the rest of us will pick up the bill when those folks get sick.

I think that if we can just have enough real-life examples like yours that represent the future to the Members of Congress, so they can feel a higher confidence level in doing this, I believe we can get this done. And we can get it done this year. I think it's very, very important that we do this this year. This problem's been stud-

ied to death. There's no point in just taking more time. We ought to move, and move now.

Again, I would urge you to reach out to Members of both parties. Tell them, "Don't play politics with this. Do what's right for America and do it this year." And tell them that you know it will be good for America's jobs. That, I think, is really critical, because you'll have a lot of credibility. And you might even set up one of these phone calls with congressional leaders. And you would certainly have a big impression on them.

Mr. Gott. We're going to leave that unit in there so that you can talk to a lot of leaders like this and not waste a lot of time.

The President. You'll save us a lot of travel time.

Mr. Gott. Yes, well, I want you guys to join the 21st century in technology on this information highway. And here's your best example.

The President. You are. This is—the Vice President's always telling me about virtual reality. I virtually feel like I'm there in the room with you today.

Mr. Gott. Well, we appreciate very much your taking the time to talk to us today about this because we think it's important, and I know you do, too. We'll do our part.

The President. Thank you. Thank you for your support for health care. Thank you for helping to take the American economy into the 21st century. I want to again urge all of you, just do what you can to personally contact the Members of Congress and, again, without regard to party. Say this is an American problem. We need an American solution. We need to do it in 1994, not later.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Gott. Terrific.

Deputy Secretary Altman. Mr. President, I'm bringing back 535 video conferencing-equipped PC's for every Member of Congress so Norman can plug into all of them just like this. [Laughter]

The President. Good for you. Thank you very much. Thanks. That is amazing.

NOTE: The teleconference began at 2:47 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.