

Remarks at a Health Care Rally in Jersey City, New Jersey
August 1, 1994

Thank you. Mr. McEntee, Mr. Sombrotto, Mr. Rivera, Congressman Torricelli, Congressman Klein, Congressman Menendez, to all those who entertained us and all those who have come here, even those who have come here who disagree with us—I have a few questions I want to ask them in a minute.

You know, I hear a lot of talk today about what constitutes real patriotism, what constitutes being a real American, characterizations of what we're trying to do with health care. I think Carolyn is a real American, and what is their answer to her? Just before I came over here I met the Agneses. He's a barber. He told me how much his health care had gone up and that his business might go down. What is the chanters' answer to him? Just before I came over here I met a woman named Jean McCabe, whose health insurance premiums got almost up to \$10,000. And she wrote us a letter and said, "Am I going to have to move to Canada or Germany or someplace where I can find somebody who will treat me like a decent citizen?" What is their answer to her? I met Michael and Joanne Britt. He's a truck driver; she's been sick. Their insurance cost them so much, they were living in a house trailer, and they thought they would never be able to buy a home, never set aside any money for retirement because they couldn't afford their health care, in this, a country that's supposed to be a middle class country that rewards work and family and faith and playing by the rules. What is their answer to her?

I ran for President, my fellow Americans, for some pretty basic reasons. I thought this country was going in the wrong direction. I thought we were in danger of losing the American dream as we went to the 21st century. And I thought we could do something about it. And all the yellers and shouters in the world will not change the basic facts. When I became President, the deficit was going up; now it's going down. The economy was going down, and now it's going up.

Years and years and years, politicians in Washington just talked about things, and now we are doing things. It took 7 years and two vetoes to pass the family leave law to give hard-working middle class people the guarantee that if they had to take a little time off, they wouldn't lose their jobs if it was for their children or their parents. It took 7 years to pass the Brady bill, but now it's keeping people alive by checking the backgrounds of people before they get guns.

I heard all that talk about our economic program. Many of the same people last year were saying, "You pass the President's economic program, it's nothing but a big tax increase; it will collapse the economy." Well, here's what it did.

It had \$255 billion in spending cuts. It had tax cuts for 15 million working Americans to keep them at work and off of welfare, including 350,000 New Jersey families. It asked the wealthiest 1½ percent to pay a tax increase, and it reduced the Federal Government—I hear all the time the other side saying we hate big Government. Well, we Democrats passed a budget that will give you the smallest Federal Government since John Kennedy was President, three years of deficit reduction for the first time since Harry Truman was President, and produced 3.8 million new jobs and a 1½ percent unemployment rate drop and the largest number of new businesses formed in any year since World War II. That is what we say to the naysayers, a Government that works for ordinary Americans again.

For 6 years I heard them talking about crime in Washington and how tough they were on crime, except nothing ever happened. But last week, after 6 years and this problem plaguing American families, what happened? The Congress decided to send for a final vote the toughest, smartest crime bill in the history of the country: a 20-percent increase in the number of police officers, 100,000 more in the United States; "three strikes and you're out"; an assault weapons ban like you had here in New Jersey that you had to fight like crazy to keep; a bill

that makes it illegal for young people to have handguns unless they're under the supervision of adults; money to keep our schools safer, so our kids don't have to duck under their desks to dodge bullets; and more money to give our young people something to say yes to, summer jobs, midnight basketball, drug treatment programs, the chance to build a better life. That is what we are producing for middle class America to build a better country.

And now, now we come to health care. I don't know if you saw this, but Saturday, Hillary and I went down to Independence, Missouri, to President Truman's hometown, with the Vice President and Mrs. Gore. And the Governor of Missouri got up, and he read all these things. He said, "Just listen to what they're saying about our President. They're saying he wants socialized medicine. They're saying he's going to take health care away from the American people. They're saying he's going to mess it up." He went through all these quotes, and then he said, "This is not what they said about President Clinton; this is what they said 50 years ago about President Truman." The lines are still the same, and the objective is still the same. I am trying to get health care for ordinary American people.

Let me tell you something, folks. When I presented our plan, I went all around the country and I listened to what people said. They said, "We want you to change it some, make it less bureaucratic, provide more flexibility, give bigger breaks to small business, take some more time to phase it in." And we said we would do that. Those changes have been made. But one thing we shouldn't change is whether America at long last will join the ranks of all the other advanced countries in the world and provide health care for all the middle class working people in the United States.

If you're on welfare, you have health care. If you're in jail, you have health care. If you're rich, you have health care. If you're a politician, you've got it. The only people who can lose it are working people. Over 80 percent of the people in the United States without health insurance work for a living every day. And it is not right.

And let me tell you this. I say this to all the people who come here to disagree with us in good faith. How do you explain the fact that all of our competitors cover their people? How do you explain the fact that, while that is happening, in the last 5 years in America, there

are now 5 million people in this country today who don't have health insurance who had it 5 years ago, that New Jersey has had almost a 50-percent increase in the number of people without health insurance in the last 5 years? Almost one million people in New Jersey alone don't have it. What is their answer? I have given you my answer. Let's ask the American people to give health insurance to everybody.

Let me say one other thing. I'm a big one on getting beyond all this slogan and name-calling and just asking what works. In the State of Hawaii, for the last 20 years in Hawaii, employers and employees have had the responsibility to make sure that everybody had health insurance. Now, if you've ever been to Hawaii, you know that everything in the entire State of Hawaii is more expensive than it is here because it's way out there in the ocean. That is, everything except one thing: health insurance. It is 30 percent cheaper in Hawaii than it is in the United States, on the average. The healthy population is greater. The infant mortality rate is down. And small business is booming because they can all afford health care. And that's what I want to do for the United States, what we know will work.

What is the answer of those who say, "We don't like what they did in Hawaii; we don't want cheaper health insurance; we don't want healthier people. We want people to be able to get a free ride and stick the taxpayer with what happens. It's all right with us if these country hospitals close down in places like my State and if Dennis Rivera's workers can't afford to take care of all the people without health insurance." What is their answer? It is time for the shoe to be on the other foot. I have been out here for one year saying, let's give health care to the American people.

Now this time who advocates shared responsibility? Who in America says everybody ought to have health insurance? Well, the American Association of Retired People, all these folks in the unions who already have health care, they're doing it for the rest of Americans, spending your money. And I thank you for that. But for the first time, for the first time ever, we have the nurses association, the medical association, the pediatricians, the children's doctors association, the family doctors association, 600,000 small businesses who provide health care for their workers, all of them say, "If everybody did it we could make this a healthier, better,

stronger country, and we would lower health care costs for tens of millions of Americans.” That’s what we’re here for. That’s what I want you to fight for. That’s what I want Congress to vote for.

My fellow Americans, this decision rests no longer in my hands alone. The Congress has been under enormous pressure. There has been enormous disinformation out there. You’ve got people here holding up signs saying “No Socialized Medicine.” What does our plan require? Everybody to buy private insurance. Most of them have parents on Medicare. You want to repeal Medicare, ma’am? Do you think that’s socialized medicine? I don’t. Medicare, however, is paid for by all of us and by our employers. And they take care of the elderly people of this country; nobody wants to repeal it.

Our plan gives you your choice of doctors. You keep your doctor. You make your decision. It’s private insurance. It’s just what Hawaii has done. And there are people who say, “Don’t ration health care.” You talk to anybody who’s had their insurance cut back or their premiums up or their deductibles increased. You talk to any doctor who’s had to hire somebody just to call the insurance companies to get them to pay the bill. We are rationing health care today; 39 million Americans don’t have it. We are losing ground.

There are millions and millions of people who are holding on by their fingernails with worse and worse policies. What I want to do is stop rationing health care, avoid socialized medicine, give good, old-fashioned private American health

care to every American working family. That’s what we’re trying to do. And all the disinformation in the world won’t change it.

So I ask you this: Don’t let the fear-mongers, don’t let the dividers, don’t let the people who disseminate false information frighten the United States Congress into walking away from the opportunity of a lifetime. Tell the Members of Congress you will support them. This is not partisan politics.

I met with three families before I came up here with these problems. I don’t have any earthly idea whether they are Republicans or Democrats. I couldn’t tell you to save my life who they voted for for President. But I can tell you one thing: If they get up and go to work and obey the law and do their best to raise their children, they deserve health insurance. And with your help, we’re going to give it to them.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. at Liberty State Park. In his remarks, he referred to Gerald W. McEntee, international president, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME); Vince Sombrotto, president, National Association of Letter Carriers; Dennis Rivera, president, 1199 National Health and Human Service Employees Union; Health Security Express rider Carolyn Vilas; and Louis and Maria Agnes, of New Jersey, who had written to the President concerning their problems obtaining health insurance.

Statement on Anticrime Legislation

August 1, 1994

Every major law enforcement organization in America supports this crime bill. Republican mayors have written members of their party in Congress to urge swift passage of the bill and Democratic mayors have done the same.

Today, the Nation’s prosecutors have come to Washington to add their voices to this mighty chorus with its simple message: Pass the crime bill now.

Police officers want it because it bans the deadly assault weapons that outgun them every

day. Mayors want it because it will put 100,000 more police officers on the streets. Prosecutors want it because it’s full of tough punishments that will allow them to seek the penalties violent criminals deserve.

The American people want action against the crime and violence that has become a familiar threat in almost every neighborhood.

It’s time for the lawmakers to do what the law enforcers have asked: Pass the crime bill now.