

The President's Radio Address *December 9, 1995*

Good morning. As you all know, we're engaged in a great debate over how best to balance the budget. We must balance the budget. Since I became President, we have cut the terrible deficit we inherited nearly in half. Now we must finish the job.

But let's remember why we want a balanced budget: to strengthen our economy and lift the burden of debt from future generations. To do that, we have to balance the budget in the way that reflects our most fundamental values: increasing opportunity; asking all to assume responsibility; strengthening our families and the economy; recognizing the duty we owe to each other, to our parents, our children, and those who need and deserve our help.

This past week, I took two steps to advance these values. First, I vetoed the Republican budget plan that was sent to me by Congress. I did it because that budget violates our values and would have hurt our economy. I did it because in so doing I vetoed the most massive cuts in Medicare and Medicaid in history, a tax increase on working people, and deep, deep cuts in education and the environment. This effort to balance the budget through wrong-headed cuts and misplaced priorities is now over. Then, I sent to the Congress a plan to balance the budget in 7 years without devastating cuts in these areas. My 7-year balanced budget plan reflects our values and protects our investments in the future. It reflects a good-faith effort to find common ground on the budget. At stake is far more than just numbers and abstract programs and proposals, and far more than the normal political debates in Washington. This debate is about people: the lives they lead, the hopes they have, the desires they have for a better life.

Nowhere is this choice clearer than in our different approaches to Medicaid. For three decades, the Medicaid program has meant that if your child was disabled in an accident or your husband got Alzheimer's or your parent needed nursing home care, you would get the help you need. The Republican budget would cut Medicaid by \$163 billion. It would repeal the guarantee of health care for poor children, people with disabilities, pregnant women, and

older Americans. Now, this repeal was not an afterthought or an unintended consequence. The congressional Republican majority is actually insisting on it. What would this mean?

Well, in 2002 alone, the year the budget is supposed to be balanced, the Republican budget could deny quality health coverage to nearly 8 million people, deny meaningful health care to over a million people with disabilities, even to 150,000 veterans and to tens of thousands of people with AIDS, many of whom are able to keep working or who can get the help they need without their families being forced into poverty because of the assistance they get from Medicaid.

Today, a poor child who gets sick has access to a family doctor. Under this bill, nearly 4 million poor children could be denied quality medical care. If they got sick, they'd have to pray for charity care at a crowded hospital emergency room. Today, pregnant women know they can get prenatal care for their sake and the sake of their unborn children. But under the Republican plan, hundreds of thousands of pregnant women could be denied regular checkups and other basic services that could lead to an increase in infant mortality or children born with irreversible problems.

Today, elderly women who have devoted themselves to their families know they can count on medical care, even if they don't have much money. But under the Republican plan, as many as 330,000 older Americans could be denied nursing home care.

Today, middle class parents know that in the awful event their child is disabled in an accident and their savings are gone, they'll get help to keep the child at home. Under the Republican plan, hundreds of thousands of disabled children could lose help for home care.

Earlier this week, I had the pleasure of meeting the Striggles family from Forestville, Maryland. Franklin Striggles works hard as a security guard. He and his wife, Denise, have health insurance from his job. But it doesn't begin to pay the cost of caring for their son, Angelo, an energetic 7-year-old who has spina bifida and who's now confined to a wheelchair. That's where Medicaid comes in. With Medicaid, this

working family can keep a job, raise and educate their other children, and give little Angelo good care. To see Angelo and his family, it's clear how much love and learning he gets from living at home with his brother and sister. It pains me to think that if the Striggles family lost Medicaid coverage, Angelo could be torn from his family, even forced to be placed in a State institution.

If the Republican cuts in Medicaid take effect, the blunt reality is that as many as 4 million children will simply be denied needed medical care. They'll either be turned away from medical facilities, denied preventive care, or be turned out too soon. That is unacceptable in a country that cares about its children. And I will not permit it to happen.

Yes, the deficit is a burden on future generations, but so is the neglect of our children. And we do not have to sacrifice our children to balance the budget. That's why I vetoed these cuts last week. Now, some Republicans continue to insist on unconscionable cuts in health care for our children as part of a balanced budget. So I'll say once more: If necessary, I'll veto these deep cuts in health care for children again and again. I'll do it because they are not

necessary to balance the budget. And they, too, will place an awful burden on future generations.

My 7-year balanced budget plan trims Medicaid and keeps costs down. It cuts Federal spending, lets States be more efficient, targets the money more wisely. But it doesn't end the guarantee of health care for millions of Americans who depend upon it now.

We expect every family to pay its bills and to care for its children. Well, our country can do the same. We don't have to hurt our children to balance the budget.

It's time for men and women of both parties to put aside their narrow interests and extreme ideology and together pursue the national interest. I have reached out to bridge the differences between us so that our country can move forward. If we'll all just work together and keep our eye on the future, we can get this job done.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:57 p.m. on December 8 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 9.

Interview With Quinn Buckner of CBS Sports in Fayetteville, Arkansas December 9, 1995

Mr. Buckner. I'm here with the First Fan. All right, now you're undefeated. Your team is now 33-24. If you had a chance to write out a play, what would you write for Nolan Richards?

The President. I just think they need a chance to get a better shot. Cincinnati is a great defensive team. Looking at these games they're winning and the teams they're beating at very low scores, and our guys are great athletes, but they're freshmen. They're junior college transfers. They're just learning to play together. They have great potential, but Cincinnati is a great defensive team. We've got to figure out a way to break their defense to get good shots, and then they'll win the game.

Mr. Buckner. Are you having much fun doing this? I mean, how often do you get to watch the Razorbacks?

The President. Wherever they're on television I try to watch them, and then if I'm working at night, I try to have somebody film it so I can watch it later. I try to get down here to see a couple of games a year, and then if they get in the NCAA, of course, I try to see them a time or two.

NOTE: The interview began at 1:10 p.m. at Bud Walton Arena.