

The President's Radio Address *June 20, 1998*

Good morning. Tomorrow is Father's Day, the day we pay tribute to the irreplaceable role fathers play throughout our children's lives. There is no greater responsibility and no greater reward than raising a child. And for me, no job, not even the Presidency, has been more important.

I want to talk to you today about what we're doing to protect our fathers, our grandfathers, and all men from one of the greatest health threats they face, prostate cancer. This year nearly 200,000 people will be diagnosed with prostate cancer, and 40,000 will die from it. In fact, every year, as many men die from prostate cancer as women die from breast cancer.

For far too long, too little was known about prostate cancer. Too little was said about it out of embarrassment and fear. Because of this, too little was done about it as precious research dollars were spent on other problems.

For 5 years now, we've worked hard to increase public awareness about prostate cancer and to find a cure. Since I first took office, we have increased funding for prostate cancer research at the National Institutes of Health by 100 percent. This year alone we're funding more than 450 critically important research projects on prostate cancer, ranging from prevention to detection to treatment. Last year scientists at the Human Genome Project and Johns Hopkins University located the first gene known to predispose men to prostate cancer. Prostate cancer is the first disease being studied by the Cancer Genome Anatomy Project, a very exciting new program we recently launched at the National Cancer Institute. We are closing in on this silent killer.

But as far as we've come, we know many questions about prostate cancer remain unanswered. We do not fully understand the role of environmental and dietary factors in prostate cancer. We do not fully understand why the disease progresses at such varying rates in different men. We do not yet know why prostate cancer disproportionately affects African-American men. And we do not yet know how to eliminate the risks of treatment for prostate cancer that discourage too many men from seeing their doctors.

The only way we will ever answer these questions and the only way we will ever beat prostate cancer is by continuing to invest in research. Today I am pleased to announce that the Department of Defense is awarding \$60 million in grants to some of the most promising research projects in the country. These grants will fund innovative new studies to determine the causes of prostate cancer, to develop new methods of prevention and detection, and most of all, to discover groundbreaking new treatments that will save lives.

These grants are an important step in our fight against prostate cancer. But we must press on. This year, as part of the historic legislation to protect our children from tobacco, I proposed to make the largest commitment in history to funding cutting-edge cancer research, a two-thirds increase to the National Cancer Institute. My proposal would also allow people on Medicare to participate in cancer clinical trials. This is especially important for prostate cancer, which overwhelmingly affects men over 65. The more older men are able to participate in these trials, the more we will learn about the disease and the faster we'll be able to find a cure.

But 3 days ago a Republican minority in the Senate bowed to enormous pressure by the tobacco industry and voted to kill this legislation. They voted against protecting our children from tobacco, against our families, and they voted against increased cancer research and against saving lives. The American people shouldn't stand for it, and I'll keep fighting to reverse it.

This Father's Day, as we celebrate how much our fathers mean to their children, we should also renew our commitment as fathers, as parents, and as Americans to our families by insisting that Congress join together in passing comprehensive tobacco legislation to protect our children, to give us the funds for cancer research, and give us the chance to save more fathers and to strengthen our Nation.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.