

most of these were delivered in the last 7 months by the parties themselves. We intend to sustain political and economic pressure to assure continued compliance with the Dayton accords.

We must continue this progress. Today I call again on all parties to the Dayton accords to fulfill their obligations to bring all indicted war criminals to justice. Carrying out these commitments is essential for advancing the work of reconciliation in Bosnia.

Statement on Receiving the Interim Report of the Secretary of State's Special Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad *January 23, 1998*

I welcome the report of the Committee, which my administration established in November 1996 to advise us on means to combat religious persecution and intolerance abroad.

I am pleased that the Committee has recognized the considerable efforts we have already made to raise the profile of these issues and invigorate our advocacy, and we will carefully

study the Committee's recommendations on how we can do more.

This distinguished group of Americans is playing a critical role in our effort to promote religious freedom abroad, and we look forward to a continued and close collaboration as the Committee prepares its final report in the months to come.

The President's Radio Address *January 24, 1998*

Good morning. Today I want to talk about our continuing efforts to fight fraud and abuse in the Medicare system.

For more than 30 years, Medicare has helped us to honor our oldest obligations to our parents and grandparents. And since I took office, our administration has made strengthening Medicare one of our top priorities. The balanced budget I signed into law last summer will extend the life of the Medicare Trust Fund for at least a decade. But to ensure that Medicare is as strong in the 21st century as it has been in the 20th, we must also do more to root out fraud and abuse.

Medicare fraud cheats beneficiaries and taxpayers out of billions of dollars every single year. It undermines the strength of this vitally important program. Since 1993, we've assigned more Federal prosecutors and investigators to fight Medicare fraud than ever before, increasing fraud convictions by a record 240 percent. All told, we've saved taxpayers over \$20 billion. And the Kennedy-Kassebaum legislation I signed into law in 1996 has given us new resources and

tools to investigate, prosecute, and convict dishonest providers and medical suppliers.

On Monday, I'll send to Congress a report that shows just how effective those new tools have been. I'm proud to say that in the last year alone we've collected nearly a billion dollars in fines and settlements for health care fraud. Money that would have lined the pockets of scam artists is now going instead to preserve the Medicare Trust Fund and to improve health for millions of Americans. We've increased prosecutions for health care fraud by more than 60 percent, and we've stopped health care fraud before it starts by keeping nearly twice as many bad providers out of the system.

Now, make no mistake; Medicare fraud is a real crime, committed by real criminals intent on stealing from the system and cheating our most vulnerable citizens. Let me just give you one example.

In New York City, a Russian immigrant, believed by Federal investigators to be part of an organized crime ring, defrauded Medicare of \$1½ million by selling substandard medical

supplies to elderly people and billing Medicare for premium goods. We shut him down and put him in jail, but he never should have been a Medicare supplier in the first place.

Last week I put in place new regulations that require medical suppliers to post surety bonds to prove they're legitimate, solvent businesses. And to further ensure that medical suppliers aren't defrauding Medicare, the Department of Health and Human Services will expand its site inspections of medical supply companies all over the country.

But we must do more to crack down on fraud and abuse in the Medicare system. The balanced budget I'll submit to Congress next month will include antifraud and waste provisions that will save Medicare more than \$2 billion. First, it will eliminate overpayment for certain drugs by making sure doctors receive no more and no less than the price they pay for the medicines they give Medicare patients. Second, it will ensure that when fly-by-night providers go bankrupt, Medicare is at the top of the list of debts

to be repaid. And finally, it will bring down costs by allowing Medicare to purchase goods and services at a competitive price.

We will only win the fight against fraud and abuse in the Medicare system with the help of the American people. We know that patients and honest providers want to help crack down on fraud and abuse. Starting next month we'll make it easier for them to do so, with a toll-free hotline that will now appear on every statement Medicare sends out to every beneficiary it serves.

With these steps, we're making sure that the Medicare system, which has served our parents and grandparents so well, will also serve our children and grandchildren well into the 21st century.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:13 p.m. on January 23 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 24.

Remarks on the After-School Child Care Initiative

January 26, 1998

Thank you very much. First, let me thank all of you who are here. Many of us have been working together now for 20 years on a lot of these issues, and this is a very happy day for us.

I thank the First Lady for all she has done on this issue for as long as I have known her. I thank the Vice President and Mrs. Gore for their family conference and the light it has shed on the announcement we're here to emphasize today. Thank you, Secretary Riley, for the community learning centers, and I'm very proud of what we've done there.

Thank you, Bill White. I'll talk more about your contribution in a moment, but it is truly remarkable. And I thank Rand and Debra Bass for giving us a living, breathing example of the best of America: parents who are working hard to do their jobs but also determined to do their most important job very well with their children. I thank Senator Feinstein, Senator Dodd, and Senator Boxer for being here.

Tomorrow, in the State of the Union Address, I will spell out what we seek to do on behalf of our children to prepare them for the 21st century. But I want to talk a little bit about education today and about this announcement in that context.

Education must be our Nation's highest priority. Last year, in the State of the Union Address, I set out a 10-point plan to move us forward and urged the American people to make sure that politics stops at the schoolhouse door. Well, we've made a lot of progress on that 10-point plan: a remarkable—a remarkable—array of initiatives to open the doors of college to every American who's willing to work for it; strong progress toward high national standards in the basics, the America Reads challenge to teach every 8-year-old to read; continued progress in the Vice President's program to hook up all of our classrooms and libraries to the Internet by the year 2000.

This has been the most important year in a generation for education reform. Tomorrow