

can't protect them. It'll be on the books all right, but if somebody throws you in jail for saying something they don't like, I'm sorry, you can't have any recourse"? There'd be a riot in this country, wouldn't there?

Look, in a lot of these cases where people really get hurt—I've sat here, and I've listened to all these stories; all of us have—believe it or not, finally the right medical decision is made by the HMO, but often it's too late. Why? Because they go up three layers or four, and the first two or three layers, the people there making those decisions—I've got a lot of sympathy with them—they're not doctors, and they know one thing: They are never going to get fired, demoted, or denied a raise for saying no.

You just think about it. When those files come in, they're never going to get in trouble for saying no. They're just like you; they want to keep their job; they want to take care of their kids. Nobody's ever going to burn them for saying no. But if they say yes, uh oh.

And what do they know; how do they sleep at night? Well, they know up the line somewhere eventually there's a doctor who's going to make a decision, and if the right answer is yes, he'll say yes—"so I better say no so I can keep my job and get my bonus, and I'll be all right." Now, that's the way this system works. That's fine if you've got something that somebody can diddle around with for 6 or 9 months. But what if you need a decision now or in 15 days or in 30 days? What if it's your family? That's what all this is about.

I'll say again, our bill covers every American. Their bill leaves out 100 million Americans. That's what this is about.

Now, I want to thank the AFL-CIO for the grassroots efforts you've made here. But I want

to ask you to intensify your effort. I want you to think about how this could affect your family. Even if you've got a plan that takes care of all this, just think about what it's like for 150 or 60 million Americans who have to live with these uncertainties every single day—to think you've got health care coverage, but maybe you don't, and it just depends on what happens to you.

The IBEW knows better. You have made a major contribution to the prosperity and recovery of America, and I am very grateful. Nobody could blame you if, after all the fights you've had to fight, you wanted to take a deep breath and relax. But you remember the issues I gave you today. There are decisions being made or not made here which will affect your lives in the near term and have a huge impact on your children's lives, none more immediate than this Patients' Bill of Rights.

So go out and fight for it. And tell America, tell all your friends and neighbors: This is not a labor issue; this is not a Democratic Party issue; this is about what kind of country we are and what kind of country we're going to be. I think you know they will stand with you.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in the Regency Ballroom at the Hyatt Regency. In his remarks, he referred to John J. Sweeney, president, AFL-CIO, and the following International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers officers: Carol Hooper, Local 1690 president, who introduced the President; John J. Barry, international president; Edwin Hill, international secretary-treasurer; and Rick Diegel, political/legislative director.

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Luncheon in Cincinnati, Ohio

September 17, 1998

Thank you very much. Maybe I ought to read Stan's talking points again. [Laughter] The only thing I didn't like about what he said was all that bragging he did on Bruce Lindsey. I'll have to live with that for the next year or two. [Laughter]

Let me say, first of all, I'm delighted to be back here in this magnificent home with a person who has been a true friend of mine and Hillary's. I want to thank Mayor Qualls and Chris Gorman for being here and for running for Congress at a time when public service is

not the easiest it's ever been. And I want to thank Lieutenant Governor Steve Henry—he's been a great friend of mine—for coming over from Kentucky. And David Leland, thank you; Tim Burke, thank you. And I want to thank Stan and Dick Lawrence for cochairing this dinner—this lunch.

I don't know if I'm going to be able to give a speech. It's not that I'm so emotionally choked up, but I never eat this much for lunch, and I'm actually sort of sleepy. *[Laughter]*

Let me say, I was deeply moved by what you said, but what I would like for you to think about, all of you, in terms of what Stan said, is not me. Hillary and I, we're doing fine. We're working on what we need to be working on, and we're doing fine. What I'm concerned about is the rest of the people that live in this country, and one more time having Washington obsessed with itself instead of America. Harry Truman once made that famous statement: "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen." So I think about that every morning, and go to the kitchen. *[Laughter]*

But all over the country—there is a country out there. This is a democracy. We're all hired hands. We showed up because we pledged to help the rest of the country and to do things the rest of the country needs. And I'm here today to help these people running for Congress, because the choice really is between partisanship and progress, between people and old-fashioned politics—or maybe even newfangled politics.

I think that's what I would like for you to focus on. By coming here today, you have helped these two candidates, and others that we're trying to advance, get their message out. And if America understands—we're 2 weeks away. When I gave the State of the Union Address, I said—and I'd like to say again, because it's an important lesson I try to remind myself of every day—when things are going well for a country, for a business, for a family, for a career, the temptation is to relax and say, "Gosh, I've been working hard. I've worked through all these tough times, and I think I'll just sort of sit in the sun for a while." For politicians, it's tempting to say, "I think I'll do nothing, because I'll get reelected because things are going well."

Do you know what we talked about around our table today? We talked about the financial crisis in Asia. We talked about what was going on in Russia. We talked about whether it could

spread to Latin America. We talked about the challenges of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. We talked about how Americans are going to go on in an international environment that has a lot of big challenges out there.

What's that got to do with these races for Congress? The American people, whether they know it or not, are going to be making a decision about whether they really want to ratify—here we are 2 weeks before a new budget year. There is no budget resolution in the Congress; that is, that says what our budget is going to be. One of the 13 appropriations bills has passed. They've killed the tobacco legislation and campaign finance reform. And last night the Senate Republican leader literally shut the Senate down for 4 hours to keep them from casting a vote on the Patients' Bill of Rights, because they knew if they voted for the bill that the House passed, which does nothing, it would be harmful; and if they voted against our bill, it would really be harmful. So they started—they just decided to kill it by stealth. They just literally had to shut the Senate down to keep from doing the people's business.

So the choice before us is whether the American people will embrace a strategy of politics or a strategy of people, a strategy of partisanship or a strategy of progress; whether they will reward a strategy of not doing anything or embrace our agenda.

You know, I know it's popular to talk about a tax cut in an election year. We've got no business cutting taxes. We had a deficit for 29 years. We have no business cutting taxes until we save the Social Security system, because otherwise the baby boomers are going to—*[ap- plause]*.

I'm not against tax cuts; mine are paid for. We have tax cuts for child care, for education, and for the environment in this budget, but they're all paid for. But to spend this surplus that won't even materialize for 2 weeks, after 29 years without one—you know, I'd just kind of like to watch the ink turn from red to black and see it dry—*[laughter]*—before we start shoveling it out the door again. And I think that's very important.

It's important to our present economic health in a world of uncertainty. And it's important to our responsibilities long term. I've been waiting since January for the Congress to fund America's portion of the International Monetary

Fund. That's the fund that enables us to stabilize our trading partners and friends around the world so they can keep buying our products. Cincinnati, I think, is doing pretty well, from the look of things. But in the high plains of America, the farmers are having the worst year they've had in decades. And one big reason is, nobody in Asia can buy our farm products because they don't have any money.

So that's two big issues: Are we going to save Social Security first or play politics? Are we going to meet our international responsibilities that help us to grow economically, or are we just going to make speeches about it?

If you look at the issues here at home—the Lieutenant Governor of Kentucky rode in with Roxanne and Chris and me, and he's a doctor. A lot of you know that. We got to talking about this health care bill of rights. This is a very specific bill. This basically says there's 160 million Americans in managed care plans and other Americans in other kinds of plans, and without regard to their health care plan, if they get in a car accident, they ought to be able to go to the closest emergency room, not one that's 10 miles down the road that happens to be covered in the plan. If they need a specialist, they ought to be able to get one; they shouldn't be able to be told by a business organization that a general surgeon will do as well or a general practitioner should do as well, particularly if the doctor is begging them to go to a specialist in the first place. If their employer changes health plans at some point during the year and the employee or someone in their family is pregnant, they ought not to have to change their obstetrician until the baby is born. If somebody in the family has got cancer, is getting chemotherapy, they ought not to have to stop in the middle of the treatment and go get another doctor. We believe medical records ought to be private. They want to make them more subject to invasion by other people.

So this is a big deal. This affects—you know, their bill leaves 100 million people out and doesn't do much for the people it covers. We're talking about a majority of the people in the United States of America who will be personally affected by how this election comes out.

And this is not a partisan issue. When somebody hauls you in on a stretcher to an emergency room and they start filling out those forms, as maddening as it can be, at least they

don't ask you what your party affiliation is. [Laughter]

This is an American issue. It's a huge issue. We're for the Patients' Bill of Rights, and they're not. And the choice the American people make in the election will determine whether they get one.

If you look at the education issue, I'm gratified that we've been able to open the doors of college wider than ever before. But our public schools are not the best in the world for all our students yet, and until they are, we can't stop.

In the balanced budget bill, paid for in the budget I sent them, there are funds to hire 100,000 teachers to take average class size down to 18 in the early grades. All the research shows that it has a dramatic, permanent effect on the ability of children to learn, especially kids that come from poor backgrounds and limited circumstances, where they may not be read to at home and get all the help they need there—paid for in the balanced budget.

We have a proposal that will help to build or remodel 5,000 schools. I cannot tell you how many schools I've visited that are surrounded by house trailers because there are so many kids that have outstripped the ability of school districts to build a school.

I was in Philadelphia the other day, where the average age of the schools is 65 years. We tell these kids, "Oh, you're the most important thing in the world to us." Tell that to a kid that has to walk up the steps every day to a school where the windows are broken, where there's a whole floor closed down, where they don't function. These old buildings are priceless. We could never afford to build them today. But we can afford to repair them and make them what they ought to be, and it's in the plan.

In our plan there's enough money to hook up all the classrooms and libraries in the country to the Internet by the year 2000, especially important to kids that don't have a computer in their home. It's an education agenda worth fighting for.

If you just take those four issues—keeping our economy going by doing our part for the global economy; saving Social Security first, before we squander this surplus we're about to build up; doing something to really advance the cause of education; passing the Patients' Bill of Rights—if you don't remember anything but

those four issues—and look, they’ve had 8 months—we’ve got one appropriation bill; they killed campaign finance reform, and they killed the tobacco legislation. Near as I can tell, that’s the record of the last 8 months.

Now, that is what this is about. It is not about me; it is about the people of this country. It is about their children, their future, and our common efforts. I am going to do everything I can to fight for these things and to fight to help people who believe in them get elected. That’s what you’re doing here.

And what I want to say to you is, when you leave here, I don’t want you to let a day go by that you don’t talk to somebody about what our common responsibilities as citizens are and what is really at stake here, in very specific terms.

We’re not particularly cynical, we Democrats. We believe we can always do better; we believe we have a responsibility to do better; and I think that it would be a very good thing if a few more of us were in the United States Congress now. The voters who used to worry about us who said that we couldn’t be trusted with the budget, now they know that we can, and they can’t. The voters that used to worry and say we couldn’t be trusted to manage the economy know that that’s not true; that we were weak on crime, know that’s not true—all those things they used to say about us.

So now we’re free to look to the future, and you have to tell voters our enemy is not adversity here; our enemy is complacency. We have to say to people, “Look at what’s going on down there in Washington. This is about us and our future. Washington always thinks everything’s about Washington. It’s not about Washington; it’s about America. And it’s about these issues.”

It’s about our ability to lead the world toward peace and freedom and prosperity. And it’s about our ability to do what needs to be done

to strengthen this country at home for a new century. If you just remember those 4 issues—there’s 40 more—but those 4 will carry us a long way. Go out and hammer and hammer and hammer and hammer and tell people to show up.

Basically, the strategy of the other side is, it’s a midterm election and our group doesn’t vote as often as their group does. And so if everybody is sort of generally happy and there’s a lot of static in the atmosphere and our base of voters don’t go vote, then they win—and if they have more money. They always have more money.

So what you’re saying is, you don’t want them to have so much more money that we can’t get our message out. And I thank you for that. But you must also be messengers. You must really talk to people about it. You’ve got to look your friends and neighbors dead in the eye and tell them this is a big election for this country. This is a huge choice about the direction of America in what is the last election of the 20th century. And if you will give them the specific examples of the Patients’ Bill of Rights, the education issue, the saving Social Security, and exercising our leadership in the world economy to protect the American economy’s growth at home, I think you’ll be quite pleased with the results. And it will have been worth all of this to all of us.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:05 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to luncheon hosts Stanley M. Chesley and Richard D. Lawrence; Mayor Roxanne Qualls of Cincinnati; Chris Gorman, candidate for Kentucky’s Third Congressional District; Lt. Gov. Stephen L. Henry of Kentucky; David J. Leland, chairman, Ohio Democratic Party; and Timothy M. Burke, chairman, Hamilton County Democratic Party.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Implementation of the Partnership For Peace

September 17, 1998

Dear _____:

In accordance with section 514(a) of Public Law 103–236 (22 U.S.C. 1928(a)), I am submit-

ting to you this report on implementation of the Partnership for Peace (PFP).