

it is most usable. And again, I want to thank Governors Carper and Leavitt for their leadership in this critical past year, and all the other Governors for their support.

Secretary Shalala told you about some of the things we're doing at the Federal level to reach more uninsured children. But let's be frank: To reach them all—to reach them all—everyone who can touch the life of a child or the child's parents needs to be involved in this effort.

Today we're here to announce an unprecedented commitment, from media to business, from the health care industry to grassroots organizations, all over our Nation, to inform families of these new health insurance options. We begin with an all-out media campaign to reach as many families as possible. NBC is unveiling a new primetime PSA to raise awareness about Children's Health Insurance Programs. Epatha Merkeson, one of the stars of NBC's "Law and Order," who appears in the PSA, is here with us today. Thank you very much for being here.

ABC and Viacom/Paramount will soon begin airing a PSA the First Lady made to inform families about the "Insure Kids Now" toll-free number. They have representatives here. I thank them. The National Association of Broadcasters will make the First Lady's PSA available to all of its member stations. Black Entertainment Television and Turner Broadcasting will also run the ad.

Before I go forward, I'd like to just unveil the two PSA's here for the first time. Let's take a look at them.

[At this point, the public service announcements for the "Insure Kids Now" initiative were shown.]

The President. I'd also like to thank the representatives from Univision here. They will run a PSA in Spanish, made by HHS.

And we're not stopping there: Major corporations, from Kmart and Ralph's Grocery to

McDonald's to General Motors; from the American Medical Response to Blue Cross/Blue Shield Association to Pfizer, all of whom are represented here, will help make sure that the "Insure Kids Now" toll-free number appears on grocery bags and restaurant placemats, on school buses and in doctors' offices, even on the toothbrushes that dental hygienists give their patients. And with the help of organizations like America's Promise, the United Way, and a host of community-based groups, families will hear about health insurance from the people they trust the most, from teachers and principals, doctors and nurses, rabbis and ministers.

Ultimately, of course, parents must take responsibility for their children's health. Our message must be: What you don't know about your children's health insurance options can hurt them. It's up to you to find out if your child is eligible for this health insurance. So call the toll-free number: 1-887-KIDS-NOW.

Working together, we can reach those kids. Look at those kids there. There's over 10 million of them. They deserve to be as healthy as we feel today. And we can do it for them.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 3 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Thomas R. Carper of Delaware, chairman, and Gov. Michael O. Leavitt, vice chairman, National Governors' Association; Gov. Angus S. King, Jr., of Maine and his wife, Mary J. Herman; Gov. Tony Knowles of Alaska and his wife, Susan; Gov. Tom Vilsack of Iowa; Irma Margarita (Maga) Rosselló, wife of Gov. Pedro Rosselló of Puerto Rico; Hovah Underwood, wife of Gov. Cecil H. Underwood of West Virginia; and actress S. Epatha Merkeson. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Radio Remarks on the "Insure Kids Now" Initiative February 23, 1999

As every parent knows, nothing is more important than keeping our children healthy. So I have very good news for working parents. Even if you can't afford private health insurance,

it's now possible to get help with doctor bills, medicines, and hospital care for your children. If your children are uninsured, please call 1-877-KIDS-NOW—1-877-KIDS-NOW. With a

little help, your children can get the care they need to grow up healthy and strong.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded at approximately 2:54 p.m. in the Oval Office on

February 22 for later broadcast as a public service announcement. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 23. These remarks were also made available on the White House Press Office Radio Actuality Line.

Statement on the Verdict in the James Byrd, Jr., Murder Trial *February 23, 1999*

When James Byrd, Jr., was murdered, it was my hope that people would join together across racial lines to demonstrate that an act of evil like this is not what our country is all about. That hope was fulfilled over the past 8 months, as citizens across the country expressed their outrage and grief over this tragedy and their determination to ensure that justice be done.

I hope that the verdict rendered today by 12 citizens in Jasper, Texas, will bring some sense of closure to the family and friends of Mr. Byrd. The First Lady and I offer our prayers for them and our hope that their memories of Mr. Byrd's life will sustain them in the difficult time ahead. The jury has spoken. Our work for racial reconciliation and an end to all crimes of hatred in this country will go on.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on a Western Hemisphere Drug Alliance *February 23, 1999*

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to provide the attached report on a Western Hemisphere Drug Alliance in accordance with the provisions of section 2807 of the "Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998." This report underscores the Administration's commitment to enhancing multilateral counternarcotics cooperation in the region.

Strengthening international narcotics control is one of my Administration's top foreign policy priorities. Because of the transnational nature of the Western Hemisphere drug trafficking threat, we have made enhanced multilateral cooperation a central feature of our regional drug control strategy. Our counternarcotics diplomacy, foreign assistance, and operations have focused increasingly on making this objective a reality.

We are succeeding. Thanks to U.S. leadership in the Summit of the Americas, the Organization of American States, and other regional fora, the countries of the Western Hemisphere are taking the drug threat more seriously and responding

more aggressively. South American cocaine organizations that were once regarded as among the largest and most violent crime syndicates in the world have been dismantled, and the level of coca cultivation is now plummeting as fast as it was once sky-rocketing. We are also currently working through the Organization of American States to create a counternarcotics multilateral evaluation mechanism in the hemisphere. These examples reflect fundamental narcotics control progress that was nearly unimaginable a few years ago.

While much remains to be done, I am confident that the Administration and the Congress, working together, can bolster cooperation in the hemisphere, accelerate this progress, and significantly diminish the drug threat to the American people. I look forward to your continued support and cooperation in this critical area.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
February 23, 1999.