

July 15 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

you. Do you believe that that needs to happen now?

Prime Minister Barak. Be careful about the directions. [Laughter]

Q. Do you believe that that needs to happen now, or can that wait for progress in the peace process?

President Clinton. Do you want me to go first?

First of all, as you correctly stated, nothing that I have said should be interpreted as a change in United States policy. I do think there will be a general atmosphere when the peace is finally made which will be positive. That's all I said.

On that question, the question you asked me, that is explicitly an issue stated for final status negotiations by the parties; that's part of the final status talks. The United States, as a sponsor of the peace process, has asked the parties to do nothing to prejudice final status issues. We certainly should be doing nothing to prejudice the final status issues. That is why I have had a consistent position on that, on the Embassy, on every issue. Whatever else we do, the United States has no business trying to prejudice these final status issues. That's what the parties have to work out in the final status talks.

Q. But Mrs. Clinton has certainly prejudged them.

Prime Minister Barak. As the Prime Minister of Israel, I would like to see all the Embassies from all around the world coming to Jerusalem, and we will do whatever we can to provide the preconditions for it. I feel that the essence of the peace effort that we are trying to drive forward right now is to bring within the shortest possible time a new landscape, political landscape in the Middle East that will make the

whole question irrelevant; you will see all the Embassies together, side by side, in Jerusalem.

Thank you very much.

Israeli Astronauts

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, is there going to be Israeli astronauts on the space station? Are you going to discuss this issue, and do you desire such?

Prime Minister Barak. I like Israelis, especially Israeli astronauts. There is an officer, highly competent officer in our air force, and I would be more than glad to see him walking in space when we enter the new millennium, maybe in 2001 or 2002.

Thank you.

President Clinton. Thank you. We have to go to work.

First Lady's Views on Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, what about Mrs. Clinton? She's prejudged the issues. What about Mrs. Clinton's prejudgment, Mr. President? Tell us about Mrs. Clinton's prejudgment, sir.

President Clinton. That's why Senator Moynihan's law is good; every individual Member of Congress can express a personal opinion, but because of the waiver, the United States does not have to prejudice the final status issue. That's good. That's the way the law is set up, and it's good.

Q. Also, she's not President, is she?

President Clinton. That's right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:29 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. Prime Minister Barak referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. A portion of the remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Statement on the Northern Ireland Peace Process

July 15, 1999

I share the regret that the people of Ireland and Northern Ireland feel at the setback in the peace process. They have voted overwhelmingly for peace. They want a permanent end to violence and to the potential for violence. The cry

for a peaceful, inclusive, democratic society in Northern Ireland has never been stronger.

Real progress has been made on all sides toward fulfilling the solemn commitments spelled out in the Good Friday agreement. It is incumbent on all parties to carry out their obligations

under that accord. I am convinced that it is possible to achieve full implementation of this historic agreement in all its aspects by next spring, as contemplated by its terms.

The British and Irish Governments intend to conduct over the next few weeks an interim review of the implementation of the agreement aimed at overcoming the hurdles in the peace

process. For the future of all the people of Northern Ireland who want an enduring peace and a normal life, I call upon all those involved to find the way to get the peace process back on track. I am ready to assist Prime Minister Blair, Prime Minister Ahern, and the parties in any way I can to achieve this goal.

Statement on Senate Action on Patients' Bill of Rights Legislation *July 15, 1999*

Tonight's party line vote for a weak, unenforceable Patients' Bill of Rights is the wrong course for America. The Republican leadership's bill is a Patients' Bill of Rights in name only.

It fails to protect more than 110 million Americans including the vast majority of Americans in HMO's. For those it does cover, this bill fails to ensure patients' access to the specialists they need; fails to ensure patients the rights to keep their doctors throughout a course, a treatment; fails to prevent insurance company accountants from making final calls on medical decisions; and it fails to hold health plans accountable for actions that harm their patients.

If Congress insists on passing such an empty promise to the American people, I will not sign the bill. Passing a strong, enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights should not be a partisan issue. This should be about protecting patients, not insurance companies.

We will not stop working on this critical issue until we provide patients the protections they need. The American people know the difference between a good and bad bill. Every major doctors, nurses, and patients organization in the country knows the difference. I believe that the will of the people will still prevail in this Congress.

Memorandum on Occupational Illness Compensation for Energy Contractor Personnel *July 15, 1999*

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Energy, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Assistant to the President for Economic Policy

Subject: Occupational Illness Compensation for Energy Contractor Personnel

Contractor personnel working for the Department of Energy (DOE) and its predecessor agencies helped our Nation win the Cold War but often faced dangerous working conditions. A small number of them were exposed to beryllium, a metal used in the production of weapons, and subsequently contracted chronic beryllium disease (CBD), a debilitating lung disease for which there is no cure. Most of those ex-

posed worked under contract for the DOE and are not covered by the Federal workers' compensation program. As a result many of those with CBD have not received the occupational illness benefits otherwise available to regular Federal employees.

Today, I am pleased to announce that my Administration will submit draft legislation to the Congress that would create a new program to give DOE contractor employees with CBD and beryllium sensitivity the same benefits—certain medical costs and lost wages—now available to Federal employees. The American people believe in fairness, and I am sure that they would