

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

July 15 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

find it fair to provide this reasonable compensation to this small group of people who contributed so much to their country's well-being and who now are suffering from this incurable disease.

Under my draft legislation, the Department of Labor would administer a program similar to the Federal Employee Compensation Act (FECA) program, which currently provides Federal workers a proportion of lost wages, medical costs, rehabilitation, and training. My draft legislation also would compensate workers whose beryllium sensitivity forced them into lower-paying jobs. As with all workers' compensation systems, the program will serve as an "exclusive remedy," barring individuals with work-related illness

claims from bringing litigation against the Federal Government.

Recognizing that other toxic and radioactive materials also may contribute to occupational illnesses, I direct you to participate in an interagency review led by the National Economic Council focusing on whether there are other illnesses that warrant inclusion in this program and how this should be accomplished. This interagency review should be completed by March 31, 2000.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum.

Remarks at Amos Hiatt Middle School in Des Moines, Iowa

July 16, 1999

The President. You know, when Tom Harkin said that anybody with any sense would take their coat off—[laughter]—I didn't know whether that meant I didn't have any sense or he just gets hot under the collar quicker than I do. [Laughter] Actually, I think the answer is a lighter suit.

I am delighted to be here, and I thank you all for your wonderful welcome. And I don't mind that it's a warm one. I always love coming to Iowa, coming back here to this wonderful city. I want to thank Ruth Ann Gaines for her dedication and her remarkable remarks this morning. I want to say that as long as young people like Catherine Swoboda are exhibit A for Iowa education, this country is going to do just fine. I thought she was terrific.

I thank Secretary Riley for coming with me. Many of you in Iowa may not know it, but Dick Riley and I began our careers as Governors together 20 years ago this year, and we've been working at education for a long, long time. I think that history will record that he is the finest Secretary of Education this country has ever had. And I'm very grateful to him, and I thank him.

I would like to thank Superintendent Witherspoon and your principal, Gary Eyerly, for welcoming us to this school. And I want to thank all the public officials who are here.

I know in addition to the Governor we have Lieutenant Governor Pederson, Attorney General Miller, Secretary of State Culver, and State Treasurer Fitzgerald. They're all over there. I thank them for joining me today. And Senate Minority Leader Michael Gronstal, thank you all for being here.

I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to my good friend Congressman Leonard Boswell, who is also a stout supporter of education. And I think it is appropriate that he's here because he's here with his wife, Dody, and I'd like to her to stand, because yesterday she retired as a teacher after 31 years. Thank you very much; bless you.

And I want to acknowledge that Ruth Harkin is here with Tom today, and to tell you that for most of my administration she was a very valuable member of the Clinton-Gore team and played a major role in our economic programs. And I want to thank her.

And finally, let me say that, as you can see, every time he talks, there is no one in the United States Senate who is more passionate about what he believes than Tom Harkin. And he believes in the education of our children. It's easy to understand why, from his own experience. Most of you probably know that his father was a coal miner who didn't finish the eighth grade; his mother was an immigrant with