

Message to the Congress Transmitting Transportation Department Reports July 26, 1999

To the Congress of the United States:

I transmit herewith the 1996 calendar year reports as prepared by the Department of Transportation on activities under the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966, the Highway Safety Act, and the Motor Vehicle

Information and Cost Savings Act of 1972, as amended.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
July 26, 1999.

Interview With Mike Cuthbert of “Prime Time Radio” in Lansing, Michigan July 22, 1999

Mr. Cuthbert. Hi. I’m Mike Cuthbert in Lansing, Michigan; welcome back to “Prime Time Radio.” As we promised you, we’ll present full and in-depth discussion of the proposed changes in our health care system, with particular focus on Medicare, as the year 2000 campaign begins. But the discussion of Medicare has not waited for the campaign to start, as you know.

With us here in Lansing, Michigan, is President Clinton, who just finished having a discussion with folks from Michigan on Medicare. Mr. President, welcome to “Prime Time Radio.”

The President. Thank you. I’m glad to be here.

Health Care Reform and Medicare

Mr. Cuthbert. Back in 1992, in a long discussion about health care reform, you stopped the proceedings and you said, very firmly, “Without wholesale health care reform, we have no hope of a stabilized, long-term economic recovery.” The economic recovery has been long, but health care reform didn’t happen. How does that impact on the Medicare plans?

The President. Well, the one thing that I didn’t believe that has happened that was good is that we had—I didn’t believe that we could get health care inflation down to the general rate of inflation without moving to universal coverage. And I think what happened was we got all the benefits of managed care in the early years—and we were very fortunate to do so—but now we’re also living with the burdens, as you hear all the horror stories that prompted me to push the Patients’ Bill of Rights.

So I think where we are now is—where I am, at least, is I’m trying to extend health insurance coverage to discrete groups that don’t have it, to try to improve the way the system works and do more preventive care, and try to modernize and stabilize the Medicare program. For example, we, 2 years ago, provided for funds to cover 5 million children who don’t have health insurance. In this Medicare reform package, we have a proposal to allow people between the ages of 55 and 65 who don’t have insurance to buy into Medicare.

But the most important thing we can do now is to stabilize Medicare financially by putting some more cash into it over the next 10 years, by adopting the most modern practices, and by providing more preventive services free, like testing and screenings for osteoporosis and cancer and other things, and adding a prescription drug benefit that we can afford.

So I think that this will be a very good, balanced package. It’s completely voluntary. It gives seniors another choice on Medicare. But the most important thing is it stabilizes Medicare for 27 years, and that’s very, very important, because all the baby boomers start retiring in—well, they’ll start retiring sooner, but the baby boomers start turning 65 in 2011. The oldest baby boomers are already in the AARP. That seems impossible to me, but there it is. [*Laughter*]

So to me, it’s very, very important that we not spend too much of this surplus on a tax cut before we do the first things first, before we stabilize Social Security, stabilize Medicare