

the minimum wage by \$1 over the next two years, I will sign it.

Unfortunately, some in Congress have proposed a more gradual increase in the minimum wage that would cost a full-time, year-round worker roughly \$1,500 over three years compared with my proposal. They have added provisions that would repeal important overtime protections for American workers. And they have been playing politics with the minimum wage bill, using it as a vehicle for costly and unnecessary tax cuts that would threaten our fiscal discipline. As I have stated repeatedly, before we consider using projected surpluses to provide for a tax cut, we must put forth things first and address the solvency of Social Security and Medicare. If Congress sends me a bill that threatens our fiscal discipline, I will veto it.

If paid-for tax cuts are attached to the minimum wage bill, they should reflect our priorities and address urgent national needs like deteriorating schools and the communities that have

been left behind during this time of prosperity. In contrast, the bulk of the provisions attached to the minimum wage bill in the House are directed away from working families. Some of these provisions could even *reduce* the retirement benefits enjoyed by millions of working Americans.

America's workers show up to work every day and get the job done. Congress should do the same this year. I urge Congress to pass a minimum wage bill that does not at the same time add poison pills that bypass the priorities of working families.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives; Richard A. Gephardt, House minority leader; Trent Lott, Senate majority leader; and Thomas A. Daschle, Senate minority leader. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

## Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives on Proposed Managed Care Improvement Legislation

November 4, 1999

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I am writing to underscore my deep disappointment with the unusual procedure employed in naming participants to the joint House-Senate conference on H.R. 2723, the Bipartisan Consensus Managed Care Improvement Act of 1999. The decision to appoint members that fail to reflect the overwhelming vote of 275 to 151 on the Norwood-Dingell bill sends the wrong message to the American people, and the wrong messengers to the conference committee.

The Norwood-Dingell Patients' Bill of Rights legislation is the only patient protections bill in this Congress that has received strong bipartisan support. Yet, out of the 13 Republican members appointed as conferees, only one voted for this legislation, and only one voted in favor of yesterday's successful motion in the House that instructed conferees to insist on including the provisions of the Norwood-Dingell bill.

It is clear that the public longs for us to reach across party lines to address issues of national concern. There are few matters that are more important than enacting a strong Patients Bill of Rights. In this regard, I am asking you to use your authority under the House rules to expand the conference committee to include members who accurately reflect the will of the House.

We need to make certain that the results of this conference will be in the public interest; as currently constituted, this committee is weighted heavily in favor of the special interests that oppose this bill. Over the years, we have worked together on drafting and passing bipartisan health care legislation, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. I hope we can build on that record so that this Congress can respond to the public's need for patients' protections as our nation's health care delivery system undergoes change.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

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

Remarks to the Community of Bradley County in Hermitage, Arkansas  
November 5, 1999

Thank you very much. Well, good morning. Thank you all for coming. I want to thank all the folks who are here with me, but especially Secretary Clickman and Secretary Slater and our Small Business Administrator Aida Alvarez for the work they have done on some of the projects we're talking about today.

I want to thank Congressman Dickey for being here and Congressman Kanjorski for coming all the way from Pennsylvania to make this tour with me. I want to thank Randy Clanton. Randy gave a good speech, didn't he? [*Applause*] You know, if tomatoes go in the tank again, Randy could go into politics. It's amazing; I think he's really got it. [*Laughter*]

And I want to thank Jimmie Sue Wade and James Carter, because they went on the tour with me today with Randy and all the other co-op members. I want to thank all the folks from the Department of Agriculture and all the people from Arkansas who work in Washington who came home with me and all of the local officials. I look out, and I see friends of mine not only from Bradley County, including all the people who came down from Warren, but from Calhoun County and Ashley County and Desha County and Chicot County and Drew County and Columbia County. There's a lot of people here who have been my friends a long time. I thank you for coming.

And Mr. Mayor, I know you've been in office 5 months, and I'm sorry it took me so long to get here. But I thought we ought to give you a little time to get organized. [*Laughter*] And I'm glad to be back in Hermitage. You know, I know there has been some publicity about how I first became associated with your community. But the first thing I want to tell you is we came here today not because of my long association with this community but because of the success of this co-op and because we want every rural community in America to know what you have done and to know that they can have a better future. That's the truth.

Gene Sperling, my National Economic Adviser who has organized all these new markets tours to places we're trying to get more investment in, he came to see me, and he said we were going to Newark, New Jersey, and Hartford, Connecticut. And I said, "Well, we've got to go someplace in rural America." "Oh," he said, "Mr. President, we've got a great place. We're going to take you home. We want you to go to someplace called Hermitage. Do you know where that is?" [*Laughter*] And so then I regaled my whole White House staff with the story of how I first came to Hermitage over 22 years ago as attorney general. Some of you remember that. You were having a labor problem because the people who came here to work didn't have adequate housing, and nobody would pay any attention to you, and you couldn't get any help from anyplace. I just came down here one night and sat and listened for 3 or 4 hours and learned more about tomato farming than I had ever known in my life and than I've ever heard since.

And then President Carter was elected, and we got some help, and we built the facilities. So a couple years later, I ran for Governor. And you've got to understand; I was 32 years old, and I was scared to death. But I knew people in Hermitage, so I came down here. And the rest of the State didn't know all that much about me. But the day I came down here, because of what I had done to help with the housing, the school was shut down, the school band played for me, we had a parade down the main street. Everybody showed up in the whole town, and I thought it was the darndest thing I'd ever seen. And so I'm driving out—it was amazing. I went crazy. I called back to Little Rock. I was just euphoric. I still—I'm still excited about it 22 years later.

So then, I'm driving to some other campaign stop, and I'm doing an interview—a dumb thing to do, right? I'm doing an interview. And so the reporter asked me a pretty good question,