

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Imports of Crude Oil *April 28, 2000*

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Pursuant to section 232(c) of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, as amended (19 U.S.C. 1862(c)), I am notifying you that I concur with the findings of the Secretary of Commerce in his report, "The Effect on the National Security of Imports of Crude Oil and Refined Petroleum Products," which determined that imports of crude oil threaten to impair the national security.

Further, I have accepted his recommendation that trade remedies not be imposed but that existing policies to enhance conservation and limit the dependence on foreign oil be contin-

ued. I am taking this action because we have already proposed additional tax credits to promote renewable and efficient sources of energy, new tax incentives to support the domestic petroleum industry, and further investments in energy-saving technologies and alternative energy sources, as the report suggested.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate.

The President's Radio Address *April 29, 2000*

Good morning. Next week, when the full Congress returns from Easter recess, they'll have less than 75 working days left to make this year a year of real progress for the American people. There is no more important critical piece of unfinished business than our need to ensure that every American, young and old, has adequate, affordable health care.

Today I want to again urge the Congress to step up to this challenge by making the passage of a strong Patients' Bill of Rights and the provision of a voluntary Medicare prescription drug benefit top priorities when they return to Washington.

This critical legislation is long overdue. The more than 190 million Americans who use managed care or other insurance plans have waited too long for a strong, enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights. They deserve the right to see a specialist, to emergency room care wherever and whenever they need it, and the right to hold health care plans accountable for harmful decisions.

Last year, in an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote, the House passed a strong Patients' Bill of Rights that provides the right protections all Americans need and deserve. It's a bill I would sign. But more than 6 months later, the bill

is still languishing in Congress. Despite their pledge to complete a real bill, the Republican majority has not only delayed action, it's actually considering legislation that would leave tens of millions of Americans without Federal protections.

A right that can't be enforced isn't a right at all, it's just a request. We need a strong bill that protects all Americans and all plans, not one that provides more cover for the special interests than real coverage for American patients.

Congress also has an obligation to strengthen Medicare and modernize it, with a voluntary, affordable prescription drug benefit. No one creating a Medicare program today would even think of excluding coverage for prescription drugs. Yet more than three in five older Americans still lack affordable and dependable prescription drug coverage.

Just this week we saw further evidence of the unacceptable burden the growing cost of prescription drugs places on senior Americans. According to a report by the nonprofit group, Families USA, the price of prescription drugs most often used by seniors has risen at double the rate of inflation for 6 years running, a burden that falls hardest on seniors who lack drug

coverage because they simply don't receive the price discounts most insurers negotiate.

Seniors and people with disabilities living on fixed incomes simply cannot continue to cope with these kinds of price increases. That's why we must take action to help them, not next year or the year after that but this year. My budget includes a comprehensive plan to modernize Medicare and provide for a long overdue prescription drug benefit for all beneficiaries.

I'm pleased there's growing bipartisan support for tackling this challenge. Earlier this month Republican leaders in the House put forth an outline of a plan that offers as a stated goal access to affordable coverage for all older Americans. Unfortunately, their plan falls short of meeting the goal. It would do virtually nothing for seniors with modest middle class incomes between \$15,000 and \$50,000 a year. Nearly half of all Medicare beneficiaries who lack prescription drug coverage fall into that category.

It's not too late to give all our seniors real prescription drug coverage this year. We can work together on a plan that's affordable, dependable, and available to all older Americans.

So I say to Congress, when you come back to Washington next week, let's get back to work on a strong, enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights; let's get back to work on voluntary Medicare prescription drug benefits. The health care of Americans is too important to be sidetracked by partisan politics. The need is urgent, and the time to act is now.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:58 p.m. on April 28 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 29. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 28 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner

April 29, 2000

The President. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, President Page, President-elect Dillon, distinguished guests. I am really happy to be here, happy to be reunited at long last with the White House Press Corps. [Laughter] If I may, let me direct your attention to a photograph. [Laughter] Taken just moments ago, it proves beyond a doubt that I am indeed happy to be here. [Laughter]

Now, wait a minute. It seems that my hair in that photo—[laughter]—is a little longer than it is tonight. So maybe I am happy to be here, and maybe I'm not. Feel free to speculate. [Laughter] Admittedly, looks and photos can be deceiving. Now look at this photo. It's a recent one of the Vice President applauding one of my policy initiatives. [Laughter] But look a little closer. Those are not his real hands. [Laughter]

Now this photo. [Laughter] It made all the papers, but I have to tell you something. I am almost certain this is not the real Easter Bunny. [Laughter] The next one is my favorite. I really like it. Let's see the next photo. [Laughter] Isn't it grand? [Laughter] I thought it was too good to be true. But there is one thing beyond dis-

pute tonight. This is really me. I am really here. And the record on that count is clear, in good days and bad, in times of great confidence or great controversy, I have actually shown up here for 8 straight years. Looking back, that was probably a mistake. [Laughter] In just 8 years, I've given you enough material for 20 years. [Laughter]

This is a special night for me for a lot of reasons. Jay Leno is here. Now, no matter how mean he is to me, I just love this guy—[laughter]—because, together, together, we give hope to gray-haired, chunky baby boomers everywhere. [Laughter]

Tonight marks the end of an era—the after-dinner party hosted by Vanity Fair. [Laughter] As you may have heard, it's been canceled. Every year, for 8 years, the Vanity Fair party became more and more and more exclusive. So tonight it has arrived at its inevitable conclusion: This year no one made the guest list. [Laughter] Actually, I hear the Bloomberg party will be even harder to get into than the Vanity Fair party was. But I'm not worried; I'm going with Janet Reno. [Laughter]