

We've also made it easier to find the features that visitors use most, like E-mailing the White House, taking an on-line tour, or finding special activities for kids. And we've made the website a permanent part of the Executive Office of the President, so that future Presidents will be able to change it to suit their needs as easily as they can change the furniture here in the Oval Office.

Under the leadership of Vice President Gore, we've used information technology to bring Government closer to citizens in many ways. People are now using U.S. Government websites to file their taxes, compare their Medicare options, and find good jobs. They're tapping into the latest health research, browsing the vast collections of the Library of Congress, and following along with NASA's missions in outer space. And we're in the process of creating a single, customer-focused website, www.firstgov.gov, where Americans can find every on-line resource offered by the Federal Government.

But we must do more to ensure that the benefits of the information revolution flow to every American. That means working to close the digital divide, to put computers in every classroom, to train our teachers to make the most of them. We must also pay attention to the issues of computer security and the privacy of our records on computers so that the newest technology doesn't undermine our oldest values.

The President's Radio Address

July 8, 2000

Good morning. With fewer than 40 days left on the congressional calendar, I'd like to speak with you about how we can seize this moment to modernize Medicare and help all seniors afford the prescription drugs that can lengthen and enrich their lives.

It was just 35 years ago this month that President Johnson signed the Medicare Act into law. He spoke of Medicare joining Social Security as a cornerstone of our society upon which the hopes and dreams of generations of seniors could securely rest. He directed our Nation, in his words, "never to ignore those who suffer

Eighty-one years ago this week Woodrow Wilson became the very first President to communicate by radio. On his way home from Europe, President Wilson used the radio, after several unsuccessful efforts, to call the then-young Franklin Roosevelt, who was his Assistant Secretary of the Navy back in Washington. It wasn't immediately clear how this new technology would be used or that in just 15 years Roosevelt, as President, would be making radio broadcasts that 80 percent of our Nation would hear. But it was clear that a new door to the future had opened.

We're at just such a moment again today, and the new White House website is just one small step toward bringing Government more fully into the information age. We have barely begun to understand how information technology will change our lives. But those of us in Government have a responsibility to use these new tools to expand the reach of democracy and give more people a chance to live their dreams.

I'll see you on-line at whitehouse.gov, and thanks for logging on.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11 a.m. on July 7 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10 a.m. on July 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 7 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

untended, in a land that is bursting with abundance."

Over these past 35 years, Medicare has proven to be a remarkable success. Before Medicare, nearly half of America's seniors didn't have any health coverage at all. Serious illness often wiped away in an instant all the savings families had put away over a lifetime of hard work. Today, nearly every senior has the security of basic health coverage. And since that time, elderly poverty has fallen dramatically, and Americans over 65 have the highest life expectancy anywhere in the world.

Yet, for all its successes, Medicare has not fully kept pace with the miracles of modern medicine. The original Medicare law was written at a time when patients' lives were more often saved by scalpels than pharmaceuticals, when many of the lifesaving drugs we now routinely use did not even exist.

No one creating Medicare today would even consider excluding coverage for prescription drugs. That's why we've proposed a comprehensive plan to provide voluntary prescription drug benefits that are affordable for all seniors, a plan that ensures that all Medicare beneficiaries, no matter where they live or how sick they are, will pay the same affordable premiums, a plan that covers catastrophic drug costs, a plan that is part of an overall effort to strengthen and modernize Medicare so we won't have to ask our children to shoulder our burden when we retire.

Across the Nation, we've seen a great outpouring of support for adding such a prescription drug benefit. And yet I'm increasingly concerned that efforts in Congress are bogging down. One reason for this is clear: The pharmaceutical industry has unleashed a shameless, scorched-earth campaign to thwart the will of the American people.

An industry-funded group calling itself Citizens for Better Medicare—can you believe that?—has flooded the airwaves with negative ads against our plan. Just this week we learned that the drug companies have enlisted nearly 300 hard-gun lobbyists, more than one for every two Members of Congress, and paid them to do everything in their power to block all meaningful reforms. All told, the drug industry has spent a staggering \$236 million on its lobbying efforts. These millions would be a lot better spent on research for new medicines.

The pharmaceutical industry is pushing Congress to adopt a private insurance program rather

than a Medicare prescription drug benefit. Insurers, themselves, however, say this won't work, and they won't participate. Just today we learned that the State of Nevada is using a private insurance model that's very similar to the plan passed by the Republican majority in the House of Representatives last week. Not surprisingly, it has not found one single qualified insurer willing to participate.

You have to give it to the insurance companies; they have been honest here. They have said that the Republican plan won't work. It's a plan designed for those who make the drugs, not for the seniors who need to take them.

So today I call on Congress to reject that approach and the reckless campaign of narrow special interests, and act together in the public interest. We need a prescription drug benefit that works for seniors and people with disabilities, not just for the pharmaceutical industry.

A few weeks ago I put forth a good-faith proposal to do just that. I said that if Congress will agree to pass a plan that offers affordable Medicare prescription drug coverage to all seniors and people with disabilities, while protecting our hard-won fiscal discipline, then I will sign a marriage penalty relief law of equal size.

At this time of year it's natural that we begin to think ahead to election day, but let's keep in mind, as well, the spirit of common purpose we just celebrated on Independence Day. That's the spirit I hope Members of Congress will bring back to our Nation's Capital when they return to work Monday. At a time when America is once again bursting with abundance, there shouldn't be a limit on what we can achieve.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on the Home Heating Oil Reserve and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs Transition and an Exchange With Reporters

July 10, 2000

Home Heating Oil Reserve

The President. Good afternoon. I want to say a few words in a moment about Togo West

and Hershel Gober and the direction of the Department of Veterans Affairs and its mission.