

## The President's Radio Address *September 16, 2000*

Good morning. I'm joining you today from the Washington Home, a nursing home in our Nation's Capital that has been delivering quality care to older Americans for more than 100 years now. The seniors here with me receive top-quality assistance from a dedicated and attentive staff.

Every one of the 1.6 million Americans living in nursing homes all across our Nation deserve the same quality care. And as the baby boomers retire, the demand for quality care will continue to rise even higher. By the year 2030, the number of Americans over the age of 85 will double, making compassionate, quality nursing home care even more important.

But while the majority of nursing homes today provide excellent care, too many of our seniors and Americans with disabilities in homes, in too many of those homes, are not getting the proper attention they deserve. According to current research, the number one culprit is chronic understaffing. When there are too few caregivers for the number of patients, the quality of care goes down.

A recent study from the Department of Health and Human Services reports that more than half of America's nursing homes don't have the minimum staffing levels necessary to guarantee quality care. And too often the staff that is there isn't properly trained. Patients in these homes are more likely to lose too much weight, develop bed sores, fall into depression. More than 30 percent are dehydrated, malnourished, at much higher risk for illness and infection.

Older Americans who have worked hard all their lives deserve respect, not neglect, and for more than 7 years now, Vice President Gore and I have acted to improve the quality of care in our Nation's nursing homes. In 1995 we put in place new regulations to crack down on abuse and neglect, stepping up on-site inspections of nursing homes.

That same year, when Congress tried to eliminate Federal assurances of nursing home quality, I said no. Then in 1998 I issued an Executive order, requiring all States to increase investigations of nursing homes and fine those that failed to provide the residents with adequate care.

Today I'm taking four new steps to improve nursing home conditions across America. First, working with Senator Grassley, a Republican from Iowa, and Senator Breaux, a Democrat from Louisiana, along with Representatives Waxman, Stark, and Gephardt, I'm sending legislation to Congress next week that I believe can be enacted this year. It will create \$1 billion in new grants to boost staffing levels in nursing homes that need it most, to improve recruitment and retention, and to give more training to caregivers, rewarding the best performing nursing homes.

While working to improve nursing home care, we have to act swiftly to keep nursing homes safe. This legislation will impose immediate financial penalties on nursing homes that are endangering the safety of their residents, and then those funds will be used to improve patient care.

Second, I'm directing the Health Care Financing Administration to establish, within 2 years, minimum staffing requirements for all nursing homes participating in the Federal Medicare and Medicaid programs. The agency will also develop recommendations to ensure that nursing homes receive the necessary payments for high-quality care.

Third, we are taking new measures to educate caregivers at nursing homes. Just this week we launched a new campaign in America's 17,000 nursing homes to identify residents who are at risk and prevent them becoming dehydrated or malnourished.

And finally, to help families select the right nursing home, we'll require all facilities to post the number of health care personnel serving their patients.

Of all the obligations we owe to one another, our most sacred duty is to our parents. They kept us safe from harm when we were children, and we must do the same for them as they grow older. They shouldn't go another day without the care they deserve wherever they live, in whatever nursing home facility.

President Kennedy once said, "It is not enough for a great nation merely to have added new years to life. Our objective must be also to add new life to those years."

The steps we're taking today will help to bring new life to our Nation's seniors by bringing a new level of quality to America's nursing homes. Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Washington Home.

## Exchange With Reporters at the Dedication of the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial

September 16, 2000

### *India-U.S. Relations*

*Q.* Mr. President, how would you describe the visit, overall, of the Indian Prime Minister? What has this visit meant to Indo-U.S. relations?

*The President.* Well, I think it's been a great success. It sort of rounds out our efforts to take a different turn in our relationships, to deepen and broaden them. As I have said many times, I am profoundly grateful for the reception that I received from the Prime Minister, the Government, and the people of India when I came with my daughter and my mother-in-law a few months ago.

I hope that this change in partnership goes beyond my service, into a whole new era of partnership between India and the United States.

You know, one thing I didn't mention a moment ago is that, in addition to the Government of India, Americans who are of Indian heritage also contributed to this magnificent memorial. There is probably no country outside India that has been more enriched by Indians than the United States. So that's another reason, and I think it's important we continue to go forward together.

### *Mahatma Gandhi*

*Q.* Mr. President, has Mahatma Gandhi made an influence on your life, sir, in any way?

*The President.* Well, when I was a boy, actually, I was a profound admirer of Martin Luther King, and I began to read all his writings. And when I read that he was so influenced by Gandhi, then I began to read about Gandhi. I was, I don't know, 17, 18, or something like that.

### *H-1B Visas*

*Q.* Mr. President, since you talked about the Indian contribution—about immigration, H-1B

visas, does your administration want to do something?

*The President.* Let me say this, the number of H-1B visas will be increased in this Congress, I believe. I'll be quite surprised if it isn't. The issue is, how much will it be increased by, and can we use the occasion of increasing the quotas to get some more funds from the companies that are hiring people for the training of our own people, who could also do these jobs—the people who are already here—if they had training? So there's no question that we're going to increase the visas.

### *India-U.S. Relations*

*Q.* Mr. President, the fact is, you said you're very excited; it was a very positive visit. In concrete terms, where do you see the alliance going now? Where in concrete terms do you see India and the United States as natural allies going ahead?

*The President.* Well, I hope in the years ahead we'll be better economic partners, better political partners. I hope we'll work together through the United Nations and other international forums. I hope we'll both be able to help to turn back what could otherwise be a dangerous tide of proliferation of dangerous weapons, not just nuclear warheads on missiles, either, chemical weapons, biological weapons. I hope we'll be able to turn that back.

And I hope some day that there will be some constructive role we could play as a partner in working with India and others to bring peace on the subcontinent.

*Q.* Will you be a strategic ally? Will we be a strategic ally?

*The President.* We've done enough talking today. [Laughter] If you want to ask the Prime Minister a question—[laughter]—