

Patients' Bill of Rights

Q. Mr. President, on the question of where patients could go to hold HMOs accountable if they're wrongfully denied coverage: Democrats say that Federal court, your preferred venue, is too slow, too expensive, and frequently too far away from where people live. Why are you so adamant about keeping people out of their own State courts?

The President. Terry, I think if you look at this piece of legislation, you'll find there's a compromise between those who say it should only be in the Federal court and those who say it should only be in the State court. And the Fletcher bill has come up with an alternative procedure, one that will allow certain causes of action to be in the Federal court and other causes of action to be in a State court. And it's the right approach. It's a good compromise between two positions.

Q. But what's wrong with Federal court?

The President. Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg Radio].

Bipartisanship/Stem Cell Research

Q. Mr. President, a two part question. Around the table here today you have all—only Republicans. Do you plan talks like this with the Democratic leaders in the House and the Senate, talks about Patients' Bill of Rights? And related to that, how close are you on a decision on stem cell research, and can you tell us which way you're leaning?

The President. I'll make a decision about that very emotional issue later on. In terms of whether I've talked to Democrats, of course I do. And there's a Democrat sponsor of this bill. He doesn't happen to be at the table, but he's on the right track, as far as I'm concerned, like the other sponsors of this bill.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:33 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. The Executive order and related proclamation of June 26, concerning persons who threaten international stabilization efforts in the Western Balkans, are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on Proposed Patients' Bill of Rights Legislation
June 27, 2001

The bipartisan proposal introduced today by Representatives Ernie Fletcher, Collin Peterson, Nancy Johnson, and Richard Burr, along with Speaker Hastert and the chairmen of the three committees with jurisdiction, Chairmen Boehner, Tauzin, and Thomas, makes progress in our effort to provide patients with a strong and enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights.

This proposal, like the legislation introduced by Senators Frist, Breaux, and Jeffords, is another example of a Patients' Bill of Rights that reflects the principles I laid out earlier this year. I am encouraged that the bill introduced today brings us sig-

nificantly closer to enacting a good Patients' Bill of Rights.

This legislation provides strong patient protections to all Americans. It ensures that patients have the right to an independent medical review when they have been denied medical care, and it holds health plans accountable by providing patients with meaningful, effective remedies when they have been harmed by a denial or delay in receiving such care.

I am committed to providing patients with expanded remedies to hold their health plans accountable and believe we can do so while protecting workers and

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their families from costly litigation that would increase health care premiums and leave too many Americans without health insurance. This legislation introduced today provides patients with meaningful remedies

while preserving uniformity and certainty for employers who voluntarily offer health care benefits for millions of Americans across the country.

Remarks at the President's Dinner *June 27, 2001*

Thank you all. Please be seated. Mr. Vice President, 11 months ago I made the smartest decision I could make when it came to politics. I picked you to become the Vice President. What a good man this guy is, and what a great job he's done for America.

I think you're the one over there with the light shining off your head. *[Laughter]* Oh yes, there you are. But I do know you're sitting next to a fabulous woman. Lynne Cheney is a great friend of Laura and mine, and we're real proud that she is a part of our team, as well.

Speaking about Laura, I can't tell you how proud I am of the job she's doing on behalf of the citizens of America. She is not only a fantastic mother and wife but a truly wonderful First Lady for America. We would like to stay for dinner, but we've got to go home and feed Barney the dog. *[Laughter]*

I'm really proud to be here at what used to be called the House-Senate Dinner. And I'm glad to have something to do with the name change. *[Laughter]* But this name—the dinner's name wouldn't have changed without the help of a lot of people in this room. And I want to thank you and the American people for giving me a chance to be the President of the greatest nation on the face of the Earth.

I want to thank Roger Enrico for his hard work. I want to thank Tommy Loeffler and George Allen and Jim McCreery, as well. I want to thank my friends, the Speaker of the House and soon-to-be majority

leader of the Senate, Speaker Hastert and Trent Lott. It is such a pleasure to be able to work with two men to try to do what's right for America. And I want to thank you all for coming. Make no mistake about it, this dinner has one goal in mind, to make sure Denny Hastert remains the Speaker of the House and to make sure Trent Lott is the majority leader of the United States Senate. And we've got a reason why.

This just isn't politics. There's a reason why we need to make sure we remain strong in the Senate—and I want to thank the Senators who are here tonight—and the reason why we need to remain strong in the House—and I want to thank the House Members who are here tonight—and the reason why is because we have an agenda that is positive for America. We have a philosophy that is conservative and compassionate. Ours is a party that stands on principle, and ours is a party that's getting things done for the American people.

You know, there's a lot of talk in this town—people like to hold press conferences; people like to call people names. Well, what I like to do is to point out that when we work together, we can make some serious progress on behalf of the American people.

Take tax reform. Gosh, I remember in the campaign—Dick will tell you—when we used to talk about tax reform, and there would be a collective yawn by the people that made the news. Our opponents said it was a foolhardy effort. But as a result