

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. And I've been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 2½ years have come to the right Nation.

We see—we are a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves. Abroad, we seek to lift whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of our country. This is the work that history has set before us, and we welcome it. And we know that for

our country and for our cause, the best days lie ahead.

I'm honored you're here. May God continue to bless America. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:12 p.m. in the Los Angeles Ballroom at the Century Plaza Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Brad Freeman, California State finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Gerald L. Parsky, chairman, Team California, California Republican Party Board of Directors; comedian Dennis Miller; actor Kelsey Grammer; and entertainer Johnny Mathis. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Radio Address

June 28, 2003

Good morning. This week, the United States Congress passed historic legislation to strengthen and modernize Medicare. Under the House and Senate bills, American seniors would, for the first time in Medicare's 38-year history, receive prescription drug coverage.

We're taking action because Medicare has not kept up with the advances of modern medicine. The program was designed in the 1960s, a time when hospital stays were common and drug therapies were rare. Now, drugs and other treatments can reduce hospital stays while dramatically improving the quality of care. Because Medicare does not provide coverage to pay for these drugs, many seniors have to pay for prescriptions out of pocket, which often forces them to make the difficult choice of paying for medicine or meeting other expenses.

In January, I submitted to Congress a framework for Medicare reform that insisted on giving seniors access to prescription drug coverage and offering more choices under Medicare. The centerpiece

of this approach is choice. Seniors should be able to choose the health care plans that suit their needs. When health care plans compete for their business, seniors will have better, more affordable options for their health coverage. Members of Congress and other Federal employees already have the ability to choose among health care plans. If choice is good enough for lawmakers, it is good enough for America's seniors.

I'm pleased to see that Congress has accepted the principle of choice for seniors. Under the provisions of both the House and Senate bills, seniors who want to stay in the current Medicare system will have that option, plus a new prescription drug benefit. Seniors who want enhanced benefits, such as coverage for preventative care and a cap on out-of-pocket costs, will have that choice as well. Seniors who like the affordability of managed care plans will be able to enroll in such plans. And low-income seniors will receive extra help so that all seniors will have the ability to choose

a Medicare option that includes prescription drug benefits.

My framework for Medicare reform also called for immediate help to seniors through a prescription drug discount card. And I'm pleased that both the House and Senate bills would make a discount card available to seniors. The card would help senior citizens by reducing their prescription drug costs, beginning early next year and continuing until the new prescription drug program under Medicare takes full effect in 2006.

The Congress must now pass a final bill that makes the Medicare system work better for America's seniors. This is an issue of vital importance to senior citizens all across our country. They have waited years for a modern Medicare system, and they should not have to wait any longer.

Earlier this month in Chicago, I met Gene Preston and his wife, Dorothy. They spend about \$300 a month on prescription drugs, and they do not have prescription drug coverage. Gene says, "Everything is going up in price. Before, we could save a couple of bucks at the end of the month.

But right now we're just holding even, if not going below even." When Congress completes its work, seniors like Gene and Dorothy Preston can look forward to better health care coverage and relief from the rising cost of prescription drugs.

I appreciate the hard work of Members of Congress who have set aside partisan differences to do what is best for the American people. I urge Members to seize this opportunity to achieve a great and compassionate goal. I urge them to finish the job of strengthening and modernizing Medicare, so that I can sign this crucial reform into law.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 2:35 p.m. on June 26 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on June 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 27 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Death of Katharine Hepburn *June 29, 2003*

Katharine Hepburn delighted audiences with her unique talent for more than six decades. She was known for her intelligence and wit and will be remembered

as one of the Nation's artistic treasures. Laura joins me in sending our thoughts and prayers to her family.

Remarks to Senior Citizens in Miami, Florida *June 30, 2003*

Thank you very much. Thanks for coming. *Sientese, por favor. Muchas gracias.* I'm honored to be here. Thank you for letting me come by to talk about a subject that is, I know, important to many, and

that is the opportunities and the chances of modernizing Medicare. I am really glad to have the invitation to come to the Little Havana Activities and Nutrition Centers. After all, it gives me a chance to check