

Today, the Iranian regime denies all these rights. It shuts down independent newspapers and web sites and jails those who dare to challenge the corrupt system. It brutalizes its people and denies them their liberty.

America believes in the independence and territorial integrity of Iran. America believes in the right of the Iranian people to make their own decisions and determine

their own future. America believes that freedom is the birthright and deep desire of every human soul. And to the Iranian people, I say: As you stand for your own liberty, the people of America stand with you.

NOTE: The statement referred to President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority.

## Remarks in a Discussion on Implementing the Medicare Modernization Act in Maple Grove, Minnesota

June 17, 2005

*The President.* Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks for the warm day too. [Laughter] It's good to be back in the great State of Minnesota. Thanks for coming. I think you're going to find this to be an interesting discussion we're about to have about Medicare. We're here to say to the seniors who live here in Minnesota and around the country that Medicare has been strengthened, reformed, and modernized, and we hope you take a look at it—the new program, because it's going to benefit a lot of people.

So what you're about to see is Government in the process of educating folks about what's available, and I want to thank my fellow panelists for being here. I think you're going to find this to be an interesting discussion.

Before I begin, I just want you to know that Laura sends her best. She's doing great, working on some new comedy material. [Laughter] But I'm really proud of her, and she and I are having the times of our life representing the United States of America, and I'm really lucky to have her by my side.

I want to thank the Governor for being here. Governor, thanks for coming, I'm proud you're here. Thanks for serving. We've got the secretary of state here. Mary,

thanks for being here. Oh, there she is. Hi, Mary. Thank you for coming. We've got the mayor, mayor of Maple Grove. I saw the mayor come in. Mayor—there he is. I appreciate you being—sitting by your old classmate. Thanks for having us. I want to thank all the folks who serve in the statehouse and local government. I appreciate you serving your State. I really want to tell you to thank your families. It's not easy to be in public office, and it's not easy to be in public office if you're a family member. But thanks for serving.

I really want to thank the folks here at Maple Grove for letting us come by. It's not easy to host the President. [Laughter] It turns out his entourage is quite big these days. [Laughter] But I really want to thank you for letting us do this. I think you're going to find this will help the seniors who use this fantastic facility. It will help them at least understand there's new options available to them when it comes to making sure there's a prescription drug benefit available to them.

I want to thank Mark. I'm going to talk a little bit about Mark in a second here, but I want to thank Rhonda Whitenack, who is the Social Security Administration training instructor. I just was with Rhonda and some folks who have taken time out

of their lives to learn what is available in this new program. See, this is a part of a grassroots effort to educate people, to explain to people what I'm about to explain to you. So, Rhonda, thank you very much. I want to thank Greg Chesmore of the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services, training instructor. *[Laughter]* His job is to instruct people, to educate people. That's his job. He works with Mark.

I want to thank Lisa Jost, who is the manager of this fantastic facility. I want to thank you all for coming. I'm tired of thanking people. I appreciate you being here.

By the way, I met John and Agnes Jurek. Where are they, the Jureks? I know they were at the airport. I think they came here with us. There they are. Thank you all for coming today. These are good folks who have volunteered for years in the Minneapolis area. They volunteer at the veterans center. See, they're volunteering to make somebody's life better. And the reason I've asked them to come and the reason why at the airport I thanked them for their volunteer work is if you really want to serve our country or your community, volunteer. Take time out of your life to help somebody. Teach a child to read. Feed the hungry. Find shelter for the homeless, and you will do a huge service to our country.

See, the greatest strength about—the greatest thing about America is the fact that we've got people with such wonderful hearts, that they are willing to take time out of their lives, just like John and Agnes. And so John and Agnes, thanks for setting such a good example. We're proud you all are here.

So Medicare worked for a lot of folks. But the problem is, medicine started to change, and Medicare wouldn't change with it quick enough. And I always believed since the Federal Government had made a commitment to elders to provide health care, that the health care we provide ought to be the best possible health care. In other

words, if you're going to provide something, you ought to give it the best shot you can, and we weren't doing that when it came to Medicare.

And I'll get you an example about one of the reasons why I became involved in this issue and called upon Congress to modernize the Medicare system. You know, the Government would pay \$28,000 for ulcer surgery—I don't know if I got the right number, but it's close to that—but not one dime for the prescription drugs that would prevent the ulcer surgery from being needed in the first place. Or the Government would pay \$100,000 for heart surgery but not the \$1,000 a year necessary to stop the heart surgery from being needed in the first place, and that didn't seem to make sense to me. That's an example of what I mean by the system was outdated, and it wasn't doing what it was supposed to do.

I believe those of us in public life have a responsibility to fix problems. I saw a problem, and fortunately, members of both political parties came together to fix this problem, to modernize Medicare.

Now, let me tell you what the Medicare—the new Medicare bill means. The first thing that happened in the Medicare bill is we—for the first time the Federal Government decided to provide help for preventive care. In other words, it's a simple concept here. Let's give you a diagnosis early, when you sign up for Medicare so that if you've got a problem, we'll cure it early before it becomes acute.

And so there is a Medicare preventive care provision now available for seniors. And I urge seniors to take advantage of this part of the Medicare program. In other words, get a checkup. When you sign up for Medicare, get the free checkup that will make it easier for docs to solve your—any long-term health problems you have. In other words, the sooner you find out what you got, the quicker it can be solved. And by the way, that saves taxpayers money. When we can solve a problem