

goal of securing the world's vulnerable nuclear materials in 4 years. At this spring's treaty review conference and beyond, we will continue to work with allies and partners to strengthen the NPT and to enforce the rights and responsibilities of every nation, because the world cannot afford additional proliferation or regional arms races.

Finally, to ensure the peaceful use of nuclear energy, the United States seeks a new framework for civil nuclear cooperation among nations, including an international fuel bank and the necessary resources and authority to strengthen the International Atomic En-

ergy Agency. For nations that uphold their responsibilities, peaceful nuclear energy can help unlock advances in medicine, agriculture, and economic development.

It took years of focused effort among many nations to bring the NPT into force four decades ago and to sustain it as the most widely embraced nuclear agreement in history. On this 40th anniversary, the United States reaffirms our resolve to strengthen the nonproliferation regime to meet the challenges of the 21st century as we pursue our ultimate vision of a world without nuclear weapons.

## The President's Weekly Address

*March 6, 2010*

This week, I asked Congress to schedule a final vote on reform that will give families and businesses more control over their health care by holding insurance companies more accountable. This comes after nearly a year of debate, as well as a 7 hour summit with Democrats and Republicans, where we had a public and substantive discussion on health care. Since then, I've said that I'm willing to incorporate some ideas offered by Republicans, and we're eliminating special provisions that had no place in health care reform.

Now, despite all the progress and improvements we've made, Republicans in Congress insist that the only acceptable course on health care is to start over. But you know what, the insurance companies aren't starting over. I just met with some of them on Thursday, and they couldn't give me a straight answer as to why they keep arbitrarily and massively raising premiums—by as much as 60 percent in States like Illinois. If we don't act, they will continue to do this. They'll continue to drop people's coverage when they need it. They'll continue to refuse coverage based on preexisting conditions. These practices will continue. And that's why we have to act now. That's why the United States Congress owes the American people an up-or-down vote on health insurance reform.

The proposal we've put forward would end the worst practices of the insurance industry,

lower costs for millions of Americans, and give uninsured individuals and small businesses the same kind of choice of private health insurance that Members of Congress get for themselves. And while it will take a few years to fully implement these reforms, there are numerous protections and benefits that would start to take effect this year.

This year, small-business owners will receive tax credits to purchase health insurance. This year, thousands of uninsured Americans with preexisting conditions will finally be able to purchase coverage. Insurance companies will no longer be allowed to deny coverage to children with preexisting conditions. And they'll no longer be allowed to drop your coverage when you get sick.

This year, all new insurance plans will be required to offer free preventive care to their customers so that we can start catching preventable illnesses and diseases on the front end. There will no longer be lifetime limits or restrictive annual limits on the amount of care you receive. Young adults will be able to stay on their parent's insurance policy until they're 26 years old. And there will be a new, independent appeals process for anyone who feels they were unfairly denied a claim by their insurance company. Finally, seniors who fall into the gap in coverage known as the doughnut hole will receive \$250 to help them pay for their prescriptions.

What won't change when this bill is signed is this: If you like the insurance plan you have now, you can keep it. If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor, because nothing should get in the way of the relationship between a family and their doctor.

If we act now, all this will happen this year. Millions of lives will improve; some will be saved. Many families and small-business owners will have health insurance for the very first time in their lives. Doctors and patients will have more control over their health care decisions, and insurance company bureaucrats will have less. This future is within our grasp.

But we also know what the future will look like if we don't act, if we let this opportunity pass for another year or another decade or another generation. More Americans will lose their family's health insurance if they switch jobs or lose their job. More small businesses will be forced to choose between health care and

hiring. More insurance companies will raise premiums and deny coverage. And the rising cost of Medicare and Medicaid will sink our Government deeper and deeper into debt.

I don't accept that future for the United States of America. I know it's been a long and hard road to this point, and we're not finished with our journey just yet. But we are close, very close. So I ask Congress to finish its work. I ask them to give the American people an up-or-down vote. Let's show our citizens that it's still possible for Washington to look out for the people's interests and the people's future.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:25 p.m. on March 5 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on March 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 5, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 6.

## Remarks on the Parliamentary Elections in Iraq

*March 7, 2010*

Good afternoon, everybody. Today the people of Iraq went to the polls to choose their leaders in Iraq's second national election. By any measure, this was an important milestone in Iraqi history. Dozens of parties and coalitions fielded thousands of parliamentary candidates, men and women. Ballots were cast at some 50,000 voting booths. And in a strong turnout, millions of Iraqis exercised their right to vote with enthusiasm and optimism.

Today's voting makes it clear that the future of Iraq belongs to the people of Iraq. The election was organized and administered by Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission, with critical support from the United Nations. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis served as poll station workers and as observers.

As expected, there were some incidents of violence as Al Qaida in Iraq and other extremists tried to disrupt Iraq's progress by murdering innocent Iraqis who were exercising their democratic rights. But overall, the level of security and the prevention of destabilizing attacks speaks to the growing capability and profession-

alism of Iraqi security forces, which took the lead in providing protection at the polls.

I also want to express my admiration for the thousands of Americans on the ground in Iraq, for our civilians and our men and women in uniform who continue to support our Iraqi partners. This election's also a tribute to all who have served and sacrificed in Iraq over the last 7 years, including many who have given their lives.

We are mindful, however, that today's voting is the beginning and not the end of a long electoral and constitutional process. The ballots must be counted. Complaints must be heard, and Iraq, with the support of the United Nations, has a process in place to investigate and adjudicate any allegations of fraud. A parliament must be seated, leaders must be chosen, and a new Government must be formed. All of these important steps will take time, not weeks, but months.

In this process, the United States does not support particular candidates or coalitions. We support the right of the Iraqi people to choose their own leaders. And I commend the Iraqi