

We all knew about her in “Hello Dolly” and “Gentlemen Prefer Blondes,” where she immortalized that song that you heard about being a little girl from Little Rock. I wish she had been.

I’d like to ask us all now to stand and sing “Happy Birthday” to her. George, you come up here to lead.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the Nation’s Governors

February 1, 1993

The President. Well, I want to say good morning to the members of the press who are here from Washington and many of you from around the Nation.

I’d like to read a statement and then call on the Governors, Romer and Campbell, to make a statement about the meeting we had here today and the actions which I will take today as a result of this meeting and the work that I have been doing over the last couple of months.

The day before my Inauguration, on one of the last days people called me Governor, I had lunch with many of the Governors here and many others with whom I have served over the past 14 years. I pledged to them a partnership between the country’s Governors and this administration, rooted in our common experience on the front lines of people’s lives.

I’ve told my friends, my colleagues, that the one thing I hoped that I could actually demand from them was a commitment to keep me rooted in that common experience and the real problems of real people. The White House, after all, only works when it is the people’s house.

Today we have continued our partnership in earnest. We agreed to challenge together the one obstacle that could keep us from success in virtually every arena of national endeavor: the twin monsters of spiraling health care costs and the agony of having no access to health care, no health care coverage, or living in fear of losing it.

Left unaddressed, the health care crisis has had devastating impacts on families, businesses, the fiscal conditions of State and local government, and the economic performance of the United States. For 12 years our national Government has ignored the problem, partisan gridlock has prevented action, and Americans are paying the price. The amount we spend on health care has more than tripled. Now we spend far more than any other nation on Earth, about 30 percent more of our income, and we get less for it.

We send American companies out into the world with this 30 percent handicap simply because of high health care costs. The average American car alone includes over \$1,000 in health care costs, twice as much as its Japanese competitor. You know as well as I do that the real people of this country are paying the price: working families who live in fear of losing their insurance; small businesses who have to choose between dropping coverage or going broke; State and local governments who have to balance their books every year and are now choosing between cutting education, raising taxes, or cutting other needed investments just to pay more for the same health care bills.

If every person striving to overcome this challenge will bring to that work the same depth of drive and determination that our Nation’s Governors have brought here to the White House today with their policy position, the American people will have the commitment it takes to solve this problem.

This meeting was a model of everything I want my relationship with our Governors to be. It wasn’t scripted or staged. It was simply an honest discussion where real work was done, real opinions were argued and a room filled with women and men who left their partisan banners outside the door. And in that spirit and what I hope is the first of a series of announcements we will make together, I want to announce that I am taking the following steps to help them meet the health care needs of their people in their States.

For years the Nation’s Governors have been arguing that the process through which waivers from the Medicaid mandates im-

posed on them by the Federal Government is Byzantine and counterproductive. They are right. I have today directed the Department of Health and Human Services and its health care financing agency to take immediately a series of actions designed to streamline the Medicaid waiver process to enable the States of our country to serve more people at lower costs. These include a requirement that from now on the health care financing agency and its regional centers will have only one opportunity to ask for additional information and clarifications on States' waiver requests. I also want the health care financing agency to examine the development of a list of standard initiatives for automatic approval for State action.

In consultation with the National Governors' Association, I want a rapid review of the entire waiver request process that produces a list of additional streamlining recommendations within 60 days. And I am directing the health care financing agency to reopen negotiations with the National Governors' Association to issue new regulations related to how they can use provider taxes and disproportionate share reimbursement to meet the needs of the people in their State.

Finally, I am directing the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct a similar review of the non-Medicaid waiver submissions not addressed in the matters I have just discussed.

I'm also happy to announce that Hillary and the leadership of the National Governors' Association have agreed on a formal process for the Governors to have input into the Health Care Task Force. Their input, their advice, their perspective is essential to our success. When all this is said and done, the health care problems of this country can only be met if we have a good partnership.

And for those of you in the press and the general public who may not understand all the language that I have used about Medicaid and waivers, if I could put it in simple terms, it amounts to this: The Federal Government requires the States to provide a certain number of health services in a certain way to people who are poor enough to qualify for Medicaid. The States very often believe that they can provide more services at lower cost if

we don't impose our rules and regulations on them.

For years and years and years, Governors have been screaming for relief from the cumbersome process by which the Federal Government has micromanaged the health care system affecting poor Americans. We are going to try to give them that relief so that for lower costs we can do more good for more people. This will be one big step on a long road to giving this country the kind of health care system it needs.

Governor Romer.

Governor Romer. We have had a very fruitful over 2 hours of discussion. And I speak for both Republican and Democratic Governors and the two Independents when I say that this issue of flexibility on the waiver process has been critical to us, and the prompt response of this administration to give us more flexibility, give us more certainty, give us quicker deadlines will simply help us to do our job better.

Now, in addition to the short-term measures, we've had some extensive discussion about what kind of long-term health care reform we need to do together. There is an acknowledgement it has to be a partnership between the Federal and the State government. There's an acknowledgement that we have made a good start; the Governors' Association will have on its agenda in the next few hours some measures relating to cooperation with this administration on managed care. And if you have further questions about that, we'll be available out on the lawn very shortly.

And I want to say in closing that we've had a very strong bipartisan approach in the Governors' Association. And I want to compliment Governor Campbell and his colleagues for working with the Democrats in the Governors' Association and this administration. We know that we need to solve this problem on a bipartisan basis, and I think we made a very good start here this morning.

Thank you.

Governor Campbell. Mr. President, we appreciate the opportunity to work with you in a bipartisan sense to find an answer to some of the problems that are really driving the States' costs to the point that we cannot fund the programs that we need to fund. The

cost shifting away from such important items as education to fund rising medical costs are, of course, driving all of our States.

We all realize that it is a difficult program and, quite frankly, that it probably cannot be solved in short order. But we're willing to roll up our sleeves and go to work with you and try to find those answers. We recognize the need to get the small employers into a position that they have access to groups and lower cost insurance for their employees. We recognize the need to go into preventive care. We know that there is a problem with the preventive care aspect in that the liability costs and the cost of doing this in the private sector are, in fact, prohibitive.

I would think that after our discussion, the opportunity may exist for us to look at the immunization side of preventive care from a joint national framework in order to meet some of these needs, much as we would do if we did a crash program for any country that was in need that we were aiding, doing it for ourselves.

I believe that working together we can, in fact, find some answers. We know that there has to be competition. We believe in managed competition. We also believe that there has to be a structure that lets people have access to primary care physicians instead of just the emergency rooms for their care because of the cost factor, as well as the fact that it's not a preventive type of program.

So we, as members of the National Governors' Association, look forward to continuing this work with you and continuing to work with Hillary and her task force, because we think that working together that we will find answers.

And in closing, let me just add my thanks to your willingness to expedite the waiver process and to deal with some of the problems that have been so vexing for us as Governors as we've tried to deal with this overall problem. We appreciate it.

The President. That's our statement. I know a lot of you here want to take pictures of your Governors, so have at it.

Governor King, of all of the people of America, they know you from behind as well as from the front, but turn around. I think you ought to turn around. How about giving them a profile, at least, that sort of tough western profile? [*Laughter*]

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:23 a.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Statement on Revocation of Certain Executive Orders Concerning Federal Contracting

February 1, 1993

Today I am taking two actions to restore a needed balance in America's workplace. I believe that these steps, by reducing unnecessary Federal Government intrusion into workplace relations, ultimately will promote the shared goals of American workers and management and strengthen the ability of this country's businesses and industry to compete in the world economy.

First, I am revoking Executive Order No. 12818. This order, issued on October 23, 1992 by President Bush, prohibits contractors that have entered into project agreements with unions from bidding on Federal construction contracts. American taxpayers and the Federal Government are not well-served by this restriction. Such agreements establish labor standards for work early in the process. They reduce instances of cost overruns by permitting contract bidders to make more reliable cost estimates before bidding. They promote completion of projects in a timely manner by assuring a stable supply of skilled workers. And they promote safe working conditions. By revoking Executive Order No. 12818 today, such project agreements will again be allowed in Federal construction contracts.

Second, I am revoking Executive Order No. 12800, issued on April 13, 1992. This order required unionized Federal contractors to post a notice in the workplace that