

Week Ending Friday, August 27, 1993

The President's Radio Address

August 21, 1993

Good morning. In the past few weeks, our Nation has taken a bold first step toward a new economic destiny. The economic program I signed into law earlier this month reduces the deficit and embraces the core values of America: the values of the middle class, of small business, of rewarding hard work and giving the next generation as bright a future as our parents gave to us. This was a crucial first step in strengthening the quality of life all across our Nation.

With the passage of the economic plan, Americans will be assured of lower deficits, lower interest rates, and real economic growth rooted in incentives for small and new businesses and new investment incentives which bring better jobs, better wages, and new economic opportunities.

Now we must take the next step. We must reform our health care system so that you and every American will be assured not only of economic security but the security of knowing that health care is always there for you. We also have to reform health care because we're spending tens of billions of dollars on things that do not make us healthier but instead endanger our economy further.

Unless we provide quality and affordable health care, we can't bring this Federal deficit down to zero and balance the budget. We can't guarantee quality health care to many U.S. citizens. We can't guarantee health for U.S. businesses who are spending too much on health care today. And we can't guarantee that millions of workers won't be deprived of their wage increases because they'll have to pay more and more and more every year for the same or less health coverage.

To be sure, a lot is right with the American health care system. Our hospitals, doctors and nurses, our technology and research make us the envy of the world, and we intend to stay that way. But at the same time, there's

clearly a lot wrong. Health care costs are draining the Nation's coffers and robbing too many Americans of the security they need and deserve. Millions of our friends and neighbors have lost their health coverage simply because they switched jobs, moved to a different city, or got sick. Many of them can't change jobs because someone in their family has been sick, and they're locked into the health coverage they have or none at all.

Now we have an historic opportunity to change all that. Next month I'll outline a health care plan to Congress that offers hope for all Americans who want to work and take responsibility and create opportunities for themselves and their children. The plan will be built on three guiding principles: security, savings, and simplicity. First, it will guarantee all Americans the security of knowing they won't lose their health coverage even if they switch jobs, lose a job, get sick, have a family member who gets sick, move to a new city, or start a small business.

Second, the plan will generate savings by introducing real competition into the health care market. We'll limit the growth of expensive premiums and costs that can't be justified, such as drugs made in America costing 3 times more here in the United States than they do overseas. We'll root out fraud and abuse which now eat up to 10 percent of every health care dollar. And we'll reform a malpractice system that drives up prices for doctors and patients. And we'll make it more rewarding for doctors to practice preventive medicine than to perform expensive tests and procedures that aren't necessary.

Third, the plan will be simpler for consumers and health care providers. We spend about 10 cents on the dollar more for administrative and paperwork costs than any other nation in the world. That's probably why health care takes up more than 14 percent of our income while no other country, except Canada, spends over 9 percent, and they're just a little over that.

Only the United States has 1,500 separate health insurance companies writing thousands of different policies, requiring millions of people to keep up with the paperwork in doctors' offices, in hospitals, in the insurance companies themselves. We're going to have one basic insurance form instead of thousands. We'll reduce nightmarish paperwork that now requires 4 times as many clerical workers to be hired as new health care providers, just to keep up with the mountains of redtape.

Reforming our health care system is not only the best way to reduce costs, rein in our Federal deficit, and provide security for our citizens, it's also good for our economy. This plan will boost the private sector by generating savings for businesses which they can use to create jobs and by creating jobs in health care, not for more paperwork but to provide new, innovative ways to people to stay healthy or be well.

When we talk about health care reform, we mean giving businesses who don't currently provide insurance plenty of time to phase-in coverage for their employees. We mean asking those employees to pay something for their own health insurance so they'll know that it doesn't come free. We mean establishing a system that gives small businesses lower insurance rates instead of pricing them out of the market. We mean providing the very smallest firms and the lowest wage firms with some modest subsidies to help them cover the costs of insuring their workers. And we mean allowing the self-employed a 100-percent deduction for their health care costs.

With health care reform, our economy will be more productive; our companies will be more competitive; our workers will be more secure in their jobs and, therefore, more productive in them; and our families will be more confident about their future. If we want to really straighten out this economy and live more prosperous lives, we have to improve the Nation's health care system.

And we know something else: The price of doing nothing about health care is far too high. Doing nothing means more and more

Americans losing their coverage. Doing nothing means allowing insurers to dictate prices, charging whatever they want to whomever they want. Doing nothing means continuing a system in which anonymous bureaucrats peer into every hospital and doctors' offices and second-guess medical decisions. Doing nothing means no wage increases for millions of workers, not to mention the most important thing of all: more fear, anxiety, and insecurity on the part of our citizens. And amazingly, doing nothing is the most expensive thing of all. It means about 100,000 Americans a month will join the nearly 40 million already without health insurance, and we will continue to spend much, much more of our income on health care than any other people on Earth.

As we work for reform in the months ahead, we can't let this health care issue fall victim to partisan bickering. This is not a Democratic challenge, not a Republican challenge, not a liberal or a conservative challenge; it's an American challenge we must all face together.

I am pledged to work with all who have a commitment to change, Republicans as well as Democrats in the Congress, with the Governors and others throughout the country, with doctors and nurses and hospitals and other health care providers, with responsible drug companies who've committed to help keep their costs within inflation and are already giving critically needed drugs to public health clinics across the country.

These are the kinds of things we need more of. This is a cause in which all Americans must enlist, a cause in which special interest must put aside a broken system and become a lobby for the American people and a lobby for the American future. We've got to roll up our sleeves, make the tough decisions now, and get on with this. With your help, I know we can succeed.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 11:30 a.m. on August 19 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 21.

Nomination for Ambassador to Norway

August 27, 1993

The President today announced his intention to nominate Thomas A. Loftus to be the U.S. Ambassador to Norway. Loftus is the director of WisKids Count and served in the Wisconsin State Legislature for 14 years, including 8 years as its speaker.

“I am pleased today to announce my intention to nominate Tom Loftus as the Ambassador to Norway,” said the President. “Tom will bring to this position the same energy and commitment to public service that characterized his leadership in the Wisconsin Assembly. He will strengthen our already strong ties with the Government of Norway and will serve this Nation with pride.”

NOTE: A biography of the nominee was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

NOTE: The President and Hillary and Chelsea Clinton were vacationing on Martha's Vineyard, MA, during the period covered by this issue. The Office of the Press Secretary released no public schedule for the President during this period.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

NOTE: No nominations were submitted to the Senate during the period covered by this issue.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released August 25

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers

Released August 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers

Acts Approved by the President

NOTE: No acts approved by the President were received by the Office of the Federal Register during the period covered by this issue.