

tually leave working families worse off than today. Strong comp-time legislation gives employees the choice of when to take their overtime pay in money or in time off from work. But under the congressional majority's proposal, employees aren't really guaranteed that choice. There are no effective safeguards to stop an employer from telling an employee who needs a paycheck more than family time that he or she has no choice: "You work overtime this week, then I'll give you less time next week."

Strong comp-time legislation would give employees the choice of when they take time off. That's the best way to strengthen families and to give parents more flexibility. But the congressional majority's plan would make it simply too easy for employers to tell workers they cannot take the comp time they have earned.

Under strong comp-time legislation, the time off you have earned is just that, time off. But under the congressional majority's plan, employees who take comp time could be forced to work extra hours at night or on the weekend to make up the time without any overtime pay. That means if you take off a Friday that you have earned by working overtime, your employer could simply make you work Saturday without paying overtime because you haven't worked your full 40-hour week.

Above all, strong comp-time legislation preserves the protection of our 40-hour week, which has been the law now for most of this century. Today the law says if you are an hourly worker and you work longer than 40 hours, you get paid time and a half for overtime. Our plan would give you the choice of taking an hour and a half off for every hour you work instead. But under the congressional majority's plan, some employees who work an extra hour would get only an hour off, less overtime than they would be eligible for today. That's money out of their pocket.

The vast majority of our employers will be fair to their workers under any system. But as we modernize our laws to fit a changing workplace, we have to uphold historic safeguards for all our employees. Giving workers the real choice of taking time off as overtime pay is good for our families. It will help all

Americans balance the demands of home and work. But it's employees and their families, not employers, who should choose if, when, and how they take and use comp time.

Congress should pass expanded family leave and a strong comp-time bill. The moment a responsible comp-time bill hits my desk, I will gladly sign it. It will be good for workers, good for business, good for the economy, and strong in the building of our families. But let me also be clear: I will have to veto any legislation that fails to guarantee real choice for employees, real protection against employer abuse, and real preservation of fair labor standards including the 40-hour week.

It's time for us to join together to give America's families the help they need to succeed on the job and in the home. Let's pass comp-time legislation, but let's do it right.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 2:10 p.m. on March 21 at the Mantyniemi Residence in Helsinki, Finland, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 22.

Remarks on the Medicare Fraud Initiative and an Exchange With Reporters

March 25, 1997

The President. Thank you very much, Governor Chiles. And thank you, Secretary Shalala. Ladies and gentlemen, I also want to thank the representatives of the AARP who are here and others who have been very interested in this program.

As all of you know, and as I have given further evidence of here today, I was recently reminded the hard way that our doctors and medical care are the best in the world. That is certainly true. I can vouch for the doctors and nurses in the hospital in Florida that cared for me when I was recently injured. I've worked hard to give all America's families access to quality health care, and as Governor Chiles and the Secretary have made clear, a critical part of that mission has to be to make sure that our system is free of fraud.

Over the past 4 years, we have made real progress in our efforts to expand access to

health care. Last year we made it possible for people to move from job to job without fear of losing their health insurance. Our balanced budget plan will provide health care coverage for up to 5 million of the 10 million children who don't have it. It preserves and strengthens the Medicare system, ensuring the life of the Medicare Trust Fund for another decade.

Today we are taking the next steps to end the waste, fraud, and abuse in health care that threatens our ability to provide high-quality and affordable health care for America's citizens. Medicare fraud costs us billions of dollars every year. It amounts to a fraud tax that falls on all of our taxpayers but most heavily upon our senior citizens. Because of fraud they have to pay higher premiums and higher out-of-pocket costs that otherwise they would not have to pay.

Medicare and Medicaid are more than just programs, they are the way we do honor to our parents, the way we strengthen our families, the way we care for our poorest and most vulnerable children. We cannot tolerate fraud that robs taxpayers even as it harms those of us to whom we owe a great duty.

The law enforcement partnership described by Governor Chiles and Secretary Shalala has made real strides in the fight against health care fraud. Over the past 4 years, we have assigned more Justice Department prosecutors and more FBI agents to fight health care fraud than ever before. We've won a record number of convictions and settlements in fraud cases. All told, since 1992, the number of health care fraud convictions has increased by 241 percent. Operation Restore Trust, which Secretary Shalala described, has the potential to save \$10 for every dollar invested in it.

All of these efforts together have helped us save over \$20 billion in health care claims. Money that would have been wasted has gone instead to help provide quality health care and peace of mind for America's families.

Today I am pleased to announce that I will send to Congress legislation to continue and toughen our crackdown on fraud and abuse in the Medicare and Medicaid programs. First, the best way to prevent fraud is to keep dishonest doctors and other scam artists out

of the Medicare system in the first place. Under this bill, a provider or supplier who's been convicted of fraud or another felony could be barred from joining the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

For example, in Florida, our investigators found a medical equipment supplier previously convicted of securities fraud, and they found that supplier was bilking the Medicare program. He was ordered to pay \$32 million in restitution, and he's back in jail serving a 9-year sentence. But people like this should not be allowed to join Medicare in the first place. With this legislation, it's less likely that they will be able to do that.

Second, our reform would improve safeguards against fraud by requiring anyone who wants to do business with Medicare to register with the Government and give us their Social Security number. This will help track and stop fraudsters who try to repeat their crimes setting up shop under phony names with dummy corporations or in new States.

Third, the legislation will toughen sanctions so that those who cheat pay the price. The Government will have a stronger hand in imposing larger and newer civil monetary fines.

And finally, it will close loopholes in the law that today let Medicare and Medicaid providers pocket overpayments from the Government simply by declaring bankruptcy. Under this bill, Medicare providers will no longer be able to avoid accountability by declaring bankruptcy.

These steps are important. They will save the Government and the American people a great deal of money. They will also buy something that money cannot alone buy, a greater sense of security and peace of mind for our parents, our most vulnerable families, and children. We can and will preserve Medicare. We can and will make the Medicaid system work better and serve more children. The steps we take today will protect and strengthen those systems that mean so much to our families and to our future. And thank you all for your contributions to the effort. Thank you very much. *[Applause]* Thank you.

And let me just say one other thing. This is my first public statement, I think, since coming back from Helsinki. We had a terrific meeting there. It was good for the United

States, good for the people of Russia. And again, I'd like to thank my medical team for making it possible for me to make the trip so soon after my surgery. But it went fine, and it was a remarkable thing, not only the progress we made on NATO but especially on our commitment to slash the nuclear arsenals of both the United States and Russia by 80 percent from their cold war highs, within decades. So I'm very excited about it. It was a good meeting, and I'm glad to be back.

President George Bush's Skydiving

Q. Mr. President, what do you think about your predecessor's venture into skydiving? [Laughter] President Bush is supposed to be parachuting even as we speak. [Laughter]

The President. I am mightily impressed. [Laughter] And I wish him well. I'm excited. I can't wait to see him get down and give us the story. [Laughter]

President's Visit to Mexico

Q. Are you going to have to postpone your Mexico trip because of your injury?

The President. What we have decided to do—and I think we've announced it—we will announce it today—is to postpone the Mexico trip for about a month and put it where I was going to do my full Latin American trip to the other countries, to Central America, to South America, and the Caribbean. And what we're going to do is to make the trip to Mexico, to Costa Rica, and to Barbados, to do Central America and the Caribbean and Mexico during that timeframe. And then later in the year, we're going to go to South America and do that trip, when I'm somewhat more mobile, because, among other things, we're going to Argentina and Brazil. They're big countries. There's going to be a lot of moving around, and I need a little more physical mobility. Besides, I'm hoping to ride horses and do some other things, and I'm not quite ready for that, as you can see.

Medicare Initiative

Q. Mr. President, the cornerstone of the Florida program is the surety bond and the on-site inspections, both of which are missing from your proposal. Why is that?

The President. Do you want to comment on that?

Secretary Donna Shalala. Yes. The on-site inspection is in it. On the surety bond, it's one of the things that we have the authority under our regulatory authority, and we'll have a later announcement on that.

The President. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:32 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Lawton Chiles of Florida.

Statement on Campaign Finance Reform Legislation

March 25, 1997

In my State of the Union Address, I challenged Congress to pass bipartisan campaign finance reform by July 4th, the date we celebrate the birth of our democracy. The only way that political reform will become law is if citizens raise their voices to demand change. I strongly support the bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators John McCain and Russ Feingold, and Representatives Chris Shays and Marty Meehan. It is real, it is fair, it is tough, and it will curb the role of big money in our politics.

We know the pressing need for reform. The campaign finance laws are two decades out of date and have been overwhelmed by a flood of money that rises with every election. Above all, campaign finance reform will help us to meet our Nation's fundamental challenges. It will help us balance the budget, fight crime, extend health care to our children, protect our young people from the dangers of tobacco. Reform will help make sure that our political system stands for ordinary Americans and helps them in their daily lives.

At Faneuil Hall, the "Cradle of Liberty," and at Independence Hall, our Founders forged our democracy. Now it is up to all of us, in a new time, to renew that democracy and to make sure that our Government represents the national interest, not just narrow interests. I thank those who are fighting for reform and who are gathered at Faneuil Hall for their leadership and urge all citizens to join in this effort. This year can be the year that we finally pass campaign finance reform.