

PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

BACKGROUND: WOMEN'S HEALTH



FAX TRANSMITTAL  
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DATE: 11-12-98

TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES (including cover sheet): 2

COMMENTS: Here's proposed release - please advise when we  
can release and provide any revisions -

For Immediate Release  
Friday, November 13, 1998

**DRAFT**

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**Federal Health Plans Greatly Expand Contraceptive Benefits Choices**

Washington, D.C. — The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has notified all health care plans participating in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) for 1999 that they must provide the full range of contraceptive services to persons covered by the federal program.

"This major expansion of benefits is a major step forward for women enrolled in our program," said OPM Director Janice R. Lachance. "And we did it with no significant cost increase."

"The hallmarks of the federal health care program are quality and choice, and this expands both for the 8.7 million people we serve," Lachance said. "I am pleased that our program in 1999 not only leads the nation in compliance with the President's Patients' Bill of Rights, but also now features this Presidential and Congressional initiative to greatly expand choice for women."

President Clinton signed legislation on October 21, 1999, that provides that all plans in the FEHBP -- excluding those that have objections based on religious beliefs -- must provide contraceptive services. On Friday, November 6, OPM sent out notices to federal employees and their agencies about the change. In addition, contract amendments incorporating expanded contraceptive benefits were sent to the 285 plans which participate in FEHBP. Five plans are currently exempted from providing contraceptive services based on their religious beliefs.

The action means that as many as 280 plans in FEHBP will have to enhance their benefits to ensure that the full range of FDA-approved contraceptive options are available in 1999. While more than 80 percent of the plans participating in 1998 offered at least a single contraceptive service, beginning on January 1, 1999, plans not specifically exempted from the requirement must offer all FDA-approved contraceptive options.

In 1999, this action will have no effect on premium rates. Future effect on costs is expected to be minimal.

The legislation allowing the expansion of benefits was offered by Rep. Nita M. Lowey of New York's 18th Congressional District in the House of Representatives. Senate sponsors were Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada and Sen. Olympia J. Snowe of Maine.

—end—

Note: Copies of the benefits notice and contract modifications can be obtained from the OPM Office of Communications.

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## **PRESIDENT'S BUDGET BUILDS ON A STRONG RECORD OF IMPROVING WOMEN'S HEALTH**

**Protecting Women Through a Health Care Patients' Bill of Rights.** The patients' bill of rights is particularly important to women as they are greater users of health care services, and they make three-quarters of the health care decisions for their families. Women also have specific health care needs that are directly addressed by a patients' bill of rights. For example, the patient protection that gives women direct access to an obstetrician/gynecologist is not only necessary to make sure that pregnant women get the care they need, but is also important to ensure that women get important preventive services as studies show that gynecologists are almost two times as likely as internists to perform timely, needed women's preventive services. For nine months, the President has called on Congress to pass a strong enforceable patients' bill of rights that contain a range of protections, including: guaranteed access to needed health care specialists, access to qualified specialists for women's health services; access to emergency room services when and where the need arises, and access to a meaningful internal and independent external appeals process for consumers to resolve their differences with their health plans and health care providers. The President also issued an Executive Memorandum in February to bring all of the Federal health plans in compliance with the patients' bill of rights. The nation's health care system has changed dramatically, as 160 million Americans are now in managed care plans.

**Helping Older Women by Proposing New Options for Americans Ages 55 to 65 to Access Health Insurance, Including Buying Into Medicare.** Currently, three million Americans ages 55 to 65 are uninsured. Women make up sixty percent of the uninsured between the ages of 55 and 65 are women. One-fifth of the uninsured between the ages of 62 and 64 lose their health insurance because their spouse becomes eligible for Medicare. Of this population, over 80 percent are women. The number of uninsured women in this age group will likely increase as the number of Americans in this age groups is expected to rise by more than 50 percent from the current 21 million to 35 million by 2010. The President's proposal gives this vulnerable population three new options to access health insurance by: (1) allowing Americans ages 62 to 65 to buy into Medicare, through a premium that ensures that this policy is self-financed; (2) providing vulnerable displaced workers 55 and over access to Medicare by offering those who have involuntarily lost their jobs and their health care coverage a similar Medicare buy-in option; and (3) giving Americans 55 and over who have lost their retiree benefits after they retire access to their former employers' health insurance.

**Preventing Discrimination Based on Genetic Information Both by Health Plans and Employers.** Studies show that a leading reason women do not get genetic testing for breast cancer is because they fear the information will be used to discriminate against them. A study in Pennsylvania designed to understand how to keep women with breast cancer gene mutations healthy reported that nearly one-third of the high-risk women invited to participate in the study refused because they feared discrimination or loss of privacy. The President has urged Congress to pass bipartisan legislation to prohibit health plans from inappropriately using genetic screening information to deny coverage, set premiums, or to distribute confidential information. He also has supported legislation that ensures that employers do not use genetic information to discriminate against employees. Tests for a genetic predisposition to certain diseases and conditions -- such as Huntington's disease, breast cancer, and certain types of colon cancer -- are already available and more genetic tests are on the horizon. However, genetic testing also can be used by insurance companies and others to discriminate and stigmatize groups of people.

**Covering Cancer Clinical Trials for Medicare Beneficiaries.** About 60 percent of Medicare beneficiaries are women. Americans over the age of 65 make up half of all cancer patients, and are 10 times more likely to get cancer than younger Americans. Currently, only three percent of cancer patients participate in clinical trials. Many scientists believe that higher participation in clinical trials could lead to faster development of cancer therapies, as it often takes between 3 and 5 years to enroll enough participants in a cancer clinical trial to make the results scientifically legitimate and statistically meaningful. The Vice President recently announced that, for the first time, Medicare beneficiaries would be able to have the patient care costs associated with cancer clinical trials explicitly covered through a new demonstration. This would give Medicare beneficiaries access to cutting-edge treatments and encourage higher participation in clinical trials.

**Creating a Historic "21st Century Research Fund" Which Includes an Unprecedented 50 Percent Increase in Biomedical Research.** Scientists are on the cusp of important new breakthroughs in biomedical research which could revolutionize the way medical experts understand, treat, and prevent some of our most devastating diseases. For example, revolutionary progress in genetics and imaging technologies are charting new ways to conquer diseases, such as breast cancer, Alzheimer's, osteoporosis, and other diseases which impact millions of women. In FY 1999 alone, the "21st Century Research Fund" would provide the largest increases in history for the National Institutes of Health (\$1.15 billion). And, for the first time, the President is proposing a sustained investment in biomedical research with a 50 percent increase in the NIH in the next five years, and with over \$20 billion dedicated to biomedical research the NIH in 2003.

**Increasing Family Planning.** The President's FY 1999 budget makes comprehensive family planning programs more widely available. The budget calls for: increased funding for Title X Family Planning grants by \$15 million -- a 46 percent increase since FY 1992 and about \$200 million for the National Institutes of Health's research on infertility and contraception, and related matters and CDC's programs to educate teenagers about sexual development and abstinence.

equal pay → CEA →

## President Clinton, Vice President Gore, and Congressional Democrats Win on the Budget

Victories Achieved for American Women

October 21, 1998

children

This Administration has made a commitment to American women and their families by expanding opportunities for women, making our homes and communities safer, investing in education and job training, protecting our children's health, promoting reproductive health services, and generating more business opportunities for women. The President fought for these priorities in the budget process and achieved significant victories for women and their families.

### Enforcement of Anti-Discriminatory Laws

- ✓ **Reduces Backlog and Expands Alternative Dispute Resolution at Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).** The President's FY99 budget included \$279 million -- a \$37 million increase over the previous year -- to significantly expand EEOC's alternative dispute resolution program and reduce the backlog of private sector discrimination complaints. The final budget fully funds the President's request -- providing the first real increase for EEOC in several years.

### Children

- ✓ **WIC, The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.** The final appropriation provides \$3.9 billion, which will support the participation of 7.4 million women, infants and children in FY 1999.
- ✓ **Expands Head Start.** President Clinton proposed a \$313 million increase for Head Start to add 30,000 to 36,000 new slots for children, continuing on the path to serving one million children by 2002. The House Republican budget did not provide the President's increase and would have denied up to 25,000 children Head Start slots if enacted. The final budget includes the President's full increase for Head Start, which is funded at \$4.7 billion.
- ✓ **Expanded After-School Programs To Serve A Quarter of A Million Children.** In his State of the Union address, President Clinton asked Congress to "dramatically expand our support for after-school programs." The President and Vice President proposed \$200 million for after-school programs in their FY99 budget. While the House Republican budget did not fund \$140 million of the President's and Vice President's request, which

after school

would have denied services to about 175,000 children, the final budget includes full funding for the President's and Vice President's initiative, which will serve a quarter of a million children each year.

→ clu  
✓  
**Improved Child Care Quality.** In his State of the Union, the President proposed an historic child care initiative to make child care better, safer and more affordable for America's working families. While the budget does not include critical investments in subsidies and tax credits to help working families pay for child care, it does include \$182 million for the President's request to improve the quality of child care.

→ quality of child care

### Employment

✓ **Expanded Small Business Opportunities for Women** The final budget provides \$8 million, a 100% increase over FY 1998 funding, for SBA Women's Business Centers, which provide resources to foster increased entrepreneurship among women. Though Congress failed to fully fund the President's request, the final level will fund up to 12 new sites, and continue two initiatives: the Women's Business Intranet and the Online Women's Business Center.

✓ **Extended Work Opportunity Tax Credit.** This tax credit encourages employers to hire individuals who have traditionally had a hard time securing employment. Targeted groups include disadvantaged youth, including those living in empowerment zones and enterprise communities, welfare recipients, and qualified veterans. The maximum credit paid to the employer is as much as 40 percent of an individual's first \$6,000 in wages. The President proposed to extend this credit in his FY99 budget and the final budget includes an extension through June 30, 1999.

✓ **\$75 Million for Welfare-to-Work Transportation Funds.** While the House and Senate provided \$50 million -- the minimum amount "guaranteed" in the transportation bill -- the final budget includes \$75 million for this competitive grant program. These funds will assist states and localities in developing flexible transportation alternatives, such as van services, to help former welfare recipients and other low income workers get to work.

✓  
✓ **50,000 Welfare-to-Work Housing Vouchers.** President Clinton's FY 1999 Budget included \$283 million for 50,000 new vouchers exclusively for people who need housing assistance to make the transition from welfare to work. The original House bill included \$100 million, while the Senate provided only \$40 million. The final budget includes President Clinton's full request of \$283 million for 50,000 welfare-to-work housing vouchers.

✓ **Extended Welfare-to-Work Tax Credit.** This tax credit encourages employers to hire, invest in training, and retain long-term welfare recipients. The credit is for 35 percent of the first \$10,000 in wages in the first year of employment and 50 percent of the first \$10,000 in the second year. President Clinton proposed to extend the credit in his FY99 budget and the final budget includes an extension through June 30, 1999.

### Family Planning and Abortion

SAP ✓ **FEHBP Coverage of Abortions** The bill continues current law restrictions on the use of funds appropriated in the Treasury General Government Appropriations Act title of the omnibus bill for abortions, or for the administrative expenses in connection with any health plan under the Federal Employees Health Benefit program that provides coverage for abortions. The language does allow for exceptions in cases of rape, incest, or where the life of the mother would be endangered if the fetus were carried to term.

SAP ✓ **FEHBP Coverage of Contraceptives** The bill requires health plans participating in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program that provide prescription drug coverage to provide contraceptive coverage. The section exempts from this requirement five-specifically named religious plans and any other existing or future plan that objects to the requirement on religious grounds. This section also prohibits health plans from discriminating against doctors who refuses to prescribe contraceptives on the basis of religious beliefs or moral convictions. In addition, this section states explicitly that the contraception requirement shall not be construed to require coverage of abortions or abortion-related services.

✓ **Protected FDA's Role in Testing RU-486** The President successfully fought for removal of a provision that would prohibit the FDA from testing, developing, or approving any drug for the chemical inducement of abortion, which would include RU-486, thereby usurping the Agency's role in making scientific determinations about the effect of drugs on the safety and health of the American people.

✓ **Increased Funding for Family Planning.** The budget will provide an increase of \$12 million for family planning services at clinics nationwide.

✓ **Defeated Parental Consent Restrictions on Contraceptive for Minors** The President successfully opposed a provision to limit the ability of family planning clinics to help prevent unintended pregnancies by requiring minors

to either receive parental consent or provide advance notice before receiving contraceptives.

### Violence Against Women

#### **Continues the Administration's Efforts to Combat Gender-Based Crime**

The final budget includes \$283 million for the Department of Justice to maintain the President's efforts to combat gender based crime. Studies show that law enforcement intervention often breaks the cycle of domestic violence, preventing subsequent incidents. This funding will also enable states to further expand outreach to previously under-served rural, Indian, and other minority populations.

break cycle domestic  
violence

- **Appointed More Women than Any Other President** -- 41 percent of Administration appointees are women.
- **Women Hold 29 Percent of the Top Positions** -- 29 percent of the positions requiring Senate confirmation (PAS) are held by women. Additionally,
  - ▶ 34 percent of Presidential appointments, including boards and commissions, are held by women.
  - ▶ 39 percent of non-career Senior Executive Service positions are held by women.
  - ▶ 58 percent of Schedule C positions are held by women.
- **Appointed the First Women Ever to Serve as Attorney General, Janet Reno, and Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright.** Including the Attorney General and Secretary of State, women make up 27 percent of the Clinton Cabinet: Alexis Herman, Secretary of Labor; Donna Shalala, Secretary of Health and Human Services; Carol Browner, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency; Janet Yellen, Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors; and Charlene Barshefsky, United States Trade Representative all serve in the President's Cabinet.
- **30 Percent of All of the President's Judicial Nominees Are Women.**
- **Nominated the Second Woman to Serve on the Supreme Court.** During his first year in office, President Clinton nominated Ruth Bader Ginsburg to the United States Supreme Court. Justice Ginsburg is only the second woman to serve on the nation's highest court.

9/98

## PRESIDENT CLINTON AND VICE PRESIDENT GORE: *Supporting Women and Families*

### **EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES:**

- **Protecting Families.** The Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA) enables workers to take up to 12 weeks unpaid leave to care for a new baby or ailing family member without jeopardizing their job. Millions of workers have already benefited from FMLA since its enactment. The President also proposed expanding the Family & Medical Leave Act to allow workers up to 24 hours per year of unpaid leave for parent-teacher conferences or routine medical care for a child.
- **Cutting Taxes for 15 Million Working Families** by extending the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). In 1997, the EITC lifted 4.3 million people, including 2.2 million children, out of poverty -- double the number of people lifted out of poverty by the EITC in 1993.
- **Increasing the Minimum Wage from \$4.25 to \$5.15**, giving six million women a raise.
- **Narrowing the Wage Gap.** Last year, the median earnings of women working full-time increased 3 percent. In 1997, the median earnings of women represented 74 percent of the median earnings for men, remaining the narrowest gap ever.
- **Fighting for Paycheck Equity.** Called on Congress to pass legislation to strengthen laws prohibiting wage discrimination.
- **Highest Homeownership Rate in History.** There are more than 68 million American families who own homes, more than six million new homeowners since the President took office. Women's homeownership is increasing at a faster rate than the rest of the country -- up five percent since the first quarter of 1994.
- **Increasing Pension Security.** Fought for legislation that has expanded pension coverage, made pensions more secure for 40 million American workers and retirees, and simplified pension plan administration. Promoting new efforts to encourage retirement savings.
- **Saving Social Security First.** In 1999, nearly 60 percent of all Social Security beneficiaries will be women. Social Security will be the major source of retirement income for a majority of these women. President Clinton is committed to saving Social Security for the 21st Century and has urged that budget surpluses be reserved for a bipartisan plan to strengthen Social Security.

### **CARING FOR OUR CHILDREN:**

- **Extending Health Care to Millions of Children with the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).** This is the single largest investment in Health Care

join  
us  
in  
the  
critical  
debate.

for children since 1965. The President fought to ensure that the Balanced Budget included \$24 billion to provide real health care coverage to millions of uninsured children.

- **Fought for and Won \$500 Child Tax Credit for 26 Million Families with Over 40 Million Children under Age 17.** Twelve million children from families with income below \$30,000 will receive the child tax credit as a result of the President's efforts. *→ child tax credit*
- **Largest Four-Year Drop in Child Poverty Since 1960s.** Under President Clinton, the child poverty rate has declined from 22.7 percent to 19.9 percent -- the biggest four-year drop in nearly 30 years (1965-1969). While this marks significant progress, President Clinton will continue to fight for policies that help to raise incomes and reduce poverty.
- **Ensuring Safe Food for America's Families,** making food safety a priority. Issued new standards to reduce and prevent contamination of meat, poultry, and seafood; signed the Food Quality Protection Act with special safeguards for kids; issued new regulations that improve the safety of fruit and vegetable juices; and created a President's Council on Food Safety which will develop a comprehensive food safety strategic plan for federal agencies.
- **Held First-Ever White House Conference on Child Care and White House Conference on Early Child Development and Learning.** In April 1997, the President and First Lady held the White House Conference on Early Child Development and Learning to highlight the benefits of early nurturing by parents. And in October 1997, the White House Conference on Child Care began a dialogue on the child care challenges facing parents today -- availability, affordability, and assuring safety and quality.
- **Proposed the Largest Single Investment in Child Care in the Nation's History.** Between FY93 and FY97, federal funding for child care increased by nearly 79 percent, providing child care services for over one million children. If enacted, the President's \$21 billion child care proposal will give child care subsidies to millions of children and increase tax credits for three million working families to help them pay for child care.
- **Signed Landmark Adoption and Safe Families Act.** This law will help thousands of children waiting in foster care move more quickly into safe and permanent homes.
- **Signed the Comprehensive Childhood Immunization Initiative.** Thanks to President Clinton, immunization rates among two-year-olds have reached historic highs.
- **Took Steps to Ensure Children Have Safe Medications.** Unveiled an FDA regulation that protects children by requiring manufacturers to study appropriate dosage levels of drugs for pediatric populations.
- **Launched New Strategies to Reduce the High Rate of Teen Pregnancies.** Teen (aged 15 to 19 years) births have fallen six years in a row, by 12 percent from 1991 to 1996.
- **Increased Child Support Collections by Nearly 70%.** Signed into law the

toughest child support crackdown in history.

- **Imposed Strict Measures to Keep Cigarettes out of the Hands of Our Children** by restricting youth-targeted advertising; and the FDA made 18 the minimum age to purchase tobacco products nationwide, requiring photo I.D.s for anyone under the age of 27. And the President is fighting to enact comprehensive tobacco legislation.

#### ***INVESTING IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING:***

- **Largest Investment in Education in 30 Years.** Maintaining his longtime commitment to education, the President enacted the largest investment in education in 30 years -- and the largest investment in higher education since the G.I. Bill -- by signing the 1997 Balanced Budget Act.
- **Providing Early Education to More than 830,000 Children with Head Start.** 200,000 more children are enrolled in Head Start today than in 1992.
- **Teaching Every Child to Read by the 3rd Grade.** More than 1000 colleges have committed work-study students to tutor children in reading, and thousands of AmeriCorps members and senior volunteers are organizing volunteer reading campaigns. In addition, the President is working to enact an early literacy bill such as the America Reads Initiative that will provide more tutors after school, improve the teaching of reading in our schools, and help parents help their children learn to read.
- **Fighting for Critical Education Investments.** The President has called on Congress to pass critical education priorities included in his FY99 Budget that include initiatives to recruit quality teachers, rebuild crumbling schools and reduce class size.
- **Striving for Excellence with National Education Standards.** Seeking high national standards for all students, the President has proposed a first-ever national test in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math.
- **Expanding Choice and Accountability in Public Schools.** Supported increase of public charter schools, from only one charter school in the nation in 1993 to more than 1,000 charter schools this year.
- **Promoting National Service** and educational opportunities through AmeriCorps.
- **Fought for Passage of Education Tax Breaks to Promote Lifelong Learning.** Representing the largest single increase in higher education since the G.I. Bill, the Balanced Budget includes a \$1,500 Hope Scholarship to make the first two years of college universally available, and a 20-percent tuition tax credit for college juniors, seniors, graduate students, and working Americans pursuing lifelong learning.
- **Largest Increase in Pell Grants in 20 Years.** Nearly 4 million students will receive a Pell Grant of up to \$3,000, 30% larger than when the President took

office.

### **IMPROVING OUR NATION'S HEALTH:**

- **Protected and Strengthened Medicare, Benefiting the 22 Million American Women Enrolled in Medicare.** The Balanced Budget Act extended the life of the Medicare Trust Fund for at least a decade; expanded choices in health plans; and provided beneficiaries new preventive benefits, including more affordable annual mammograms for all beneficiaries, cervical cancer screening, and tests to help detect osteoporosis. The President has also put forth a new proposal that will provide greater access to health insurance for Americans ages 55 to 65, including an option to buy into Medicare.
- **Increased Funding for Breast Cancer Research.** Since the President took office, funding for breast cancer research, prevention and treatment has doubled, from about \$275 million in FY 1993 to \$577 million in the President's FY 1999 budget. In addition, the President has implemented the Mammography Quality Standards Act to ensure the quality of mammograms. Women can now find a certified mammography facility by calling 1-800-4-CANCER.
- **Providing Protection with the Patients' Bill of Rights.** The President is calling on Congress to pass Federally enforceable consumer health care protections that include: guaranteed access to needed health care specialists including direct access to an OB-GYN; access to emergency room services when and where the need arises; continuity of care protections to ensure that patients' care will not abruptly change if their provider is dropped; access to a timely internal and independent external appeals process for consumers to resolve their differences with their health plans; a limit on financial incentives to doctors to limit care and assurances that doctors and patients can openly discuss treatment options. Women are particularly vulnerable without these health care protections because they are greater users of health care services, they make three-quarters of the health care decisions for their families, and they have specific health care needs that are directly addressed by a patients' bill of rights.
- **Preventing Discrimination Based on Genetic Information Both by Health Plans and Employers.** Urging Congress to pass bipartisan legislation to prohibit health plans from inappropriately using genetic screening information to deny coverage, set premiums, or to distribute confidential information. The President also has supported legislation that ensures that employers do not use genetic information to discriminate against employees.
- **Fought for Greater Health Security for America's Families.** The President signed into law the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act which helps millions of Americans who move from one job to another, who are self-employed, or who have pre-existing medical conditions keep their health

→ entitlement reform

women's health → provider message

insurance.

- **Endorsed Legislation That Would Ban Drive-thru Mastectomies**, allowing women to stay in the hospital at least 48 hours following a mastectomy.
- **Ended Drive-Thru Deliveries.** Proposed and signed into law legislation requiring insurers to cover at least 48 hours of a post-natal hospital stay (72 hours for a Cesarean).

#### **MAKING OUR HOMES AND COMMUNITIES SAFER:**

- **Putting 100,000 More Police on the Streets.** At this time, nearly 80,000 officers have been funded through the 1994 Crime Bill, on the way to 100,000 more police on the streets and in our communities. And violent crime has dropped six years in a row - the longest period of decline in 60 years.
- **Signed the Assault Weapons Ban, the Brady Bill and an Extension of Brady into Law.** The Brady Law has already kept handguns away from 250,000 persons including felons, fugitives and individuals convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors or who are under restraining orders. The President signed into law the extension of the Brady Law, which prohibits anyone convicted of a domestic violence offense -- misdemeanor or felony -- from owning or possessing a firearm.
- **Will Hold the First-Ever White House Conference on School Safety.** On October 15, 1998, the President will host the White House Conference on School Safety. The participants will explore solutions to this national challenge: How do schools, families and communities work together to make sure that every child is safe in every school in America.
- **Signed Megan's Law and the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offender Registration Act**, requiring states to set up sex offender registration systems and allows community notification when sex offenders move into neighborhoods.
- **Championed and Signed the Violence Against Women Act**, the cornerstone of the President's efforts to fight domestic violence, and created an office at the Department of Justice dedicated to combating violence against women.
- **More than Tripled Funding to Domestic Violence Shelters** and instituted new penalties against men who stalk, threaten or abuse women across state lines.
- **Established Nationwide 24-Hour Domestic Violence Hotline.** The hotline (1-800-797-SAFE) provides immediate crisis intervention, counseling and referrals for those in need. Since the hotline opened, there have been 229,000 calls -- averaging 8,000 calls a month -- from all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

*Domestic  
Violence*

#### **PROMOTING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES FOR WOMEN:**

- **Reversed the "Gag Rule"** limiting the information federally funded family planning clinics could give to women.
- **Greater Support for Family Planning.** The President's FY99 proposal will increase Title X Family Planning grants by \$15 million -- a 46 percent increase since FY92.
- **Signed the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act**, establishing a safety-zone around women's health clinics.

#### **STRENGTHENING EQUAL EMPLOYMENT PROTECTIONS:**

- **Increasing Civil Rights Enforcement.** Proposed for the largest single increase in funding to enforce existing civil rights laws in nearly two decades. Through new reforms and heightened commitment to enforcement, the Administration will seek to prevent discrimination before it occurs and to punish those who do discriminate in employment, education, housing and health care, and against those with disabilities. The Clinton Administration's FY99 budget contains \$602 million for civil rights enforcement agencies and offices -- an increase of \$86 million over last year's funding.
- **Increasing Funding for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).** The cornerstone of the improved civil rights enforcement effort is a \$37 million increase (15 percent) for the EEOC. Through increased use of mediation, improved information technology and an expanded investigative staff, the EEOC will reduce the average time for resolving private-sector complaints from over 9.4 months to 6 months and cut the backlog of cases from 64,000 to 28,000, by the year 2000.

#### **GENERATING MORE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN:**

- **Women Are Starting Businesses at Twice the Rate of All Businesses.** Women own nearly 40 percent of all firms in the United States. These eight million women-owned firms employ 18.5 million —one in every five U.S. workers — and contribute \$2.3 trillion to the economy. The Small Business Administration's Office of Women's Business Ownership is working to foster this growth.
- **Tripled the Number of Small Business Loans to Women Entrepreneurs.** Between 1993 and 1997 the SBA approved nearly 50,000 loans to women entrepreneurs under the 7(a) and 504 loan programs. Last year alone, the Small Business Administration granted more than 10,000 loans, worth \$1.67 billion, to women small business owners, triple the number of loans granted in 1992.

#### **WOMEN AS PARTNERS IN DECISION MAKING:**

## PRESIDENT CLINTON AND VICE PRESIDENT GORE:

### *Supporting Women and Families*

#### **EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES:**

- **Protecting Families.** The Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA) enables workers to take up to 12 weeks unpaid leave to care for a new baby or ailing family member without jeopardizing their job. Millions of workers have already benefited from FMLA since its enactment. The President also proposed expanding the Family & Medical Leave Act to allow workers up to 24 hours per year of unpaid leave for parent-teacher conferences or routine medical care for a child.
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fruit and vegetable juices; and created a President's Council on Food Safety which will develop a comprehensive food safety strategic plan for federal agencies.

- **Held First-Ever White House Conference on Child Care and White House Conference on Early Child Development and Learning.** In April 1997, the President and First Lady held the White House Conference on Early Child Development and Learning to highlight the benefits of early nurturing by parents. And in October 1997, the White House Conference on Child Care began a dialogue on the child care challenges facing parents today -- availability, affordability, and assuring safety and quality.
- **Proposed the Largest Single Investment in Child Care in the Nation's History.** Between FY93 and FY97, federal funding for child care increased by nearly 79 percent, providing child care services for over one million children. If enacted, the President's \$21 billion child care proposal will give child care subsidies to millions of children and increase tax credits for three million working families to help them pay for child care.
- **Signed Landmark Adoption and Safe Families Act.** This law will help thousands of children waiting in foster care move more quickly into safe and permanent homes.
- **Signed the Comprehensive Childhood Immunization Initiative.** Thanks to President Clinton, immunization rates among two-year-olds have reached historic highs.
- **Took Steps to Ensure Children Have Safe Medications.** Unveiled an FDA regulation that protects children by requiring manufacturers to study appropriate dosage levels of drugs for pediatric populations.
- **Launched New Strategies to Reduce the High Rate of Teen Pregnancies.** Teen (aged 15 to 19 years) births have fallen six years in a row, by 12 percent from 1991 to 1996.
- **Increased Child Support Collections by Nearly 70%.** Signed into law the toughest child support crackdown in history.
- **Imposed Strict Measures to Keep Cigarettes out of the Hands of Our Children** by restricting youth-targeted advertising; and the FDA made 18 the minimum age to purchase tobacco products nationwide, requiring photo I.D.s for anyone under the age of 27. And the President is fighting to enact comprehensive tobacco legislation.

#### *INVESTING IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING:*

- **Largest Investment in Education in 30 Years.** Maintaining his longtime commitment to education, the President enacted the largest investment in education in 30 years -- and the largest investment in higher education since the G.I. Bill -- by signing the 1997 Balanced Budget Act.
- **Providing Early Education to More than 830,000 Children with Head Start.** 200,000 more children are enrolled in Head Start today than in 1992.
- **Teaching Every Child to Read by the 3rd Grade.** More than 1000 colleges have committed work-study students to tutor children in reading, and thousands of AmeriCorps members and senior volunteers are organizing volunteer reading campaigns. In addition, the President is working to enact an early literacy bill such as the America Reads Initiative that will provide more tutors after school, improve the teaching of reading in our schools, and help parents help their children learn to read.
- **Fighting for Critical Education Investments.** The President has called on Congress to pass critical education priorities included in his FY99 Budget that include initiatives to recruit quality teachers, rebuild crumbling schools and reduce class size.
- **Striving for Excellence with National Education Standards.** Seeking high national standards for

all students, the President has proposed a first-ever national test in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math.

- **Expanding Choice and Accountability in Public Schools.** Supported increase of public charter schools, from only one charter school in the nation in 1993 to more than 1,000 charter schools this year.
- **Promoting National Service** and educational opportunities through AmeriCorps.
- **Fought for Passage of Education Tax Breaks to Promote Lifelong Learning.** Representing the largest single increase in higher education since the G.I. Bill, the Balanced Budget includes a \$1,500 Hope Scholarship to make the first two years of college universally available, and a 20-percent tuition tax credit for college juniors, seniors, graduate students, and working Americans pursuing lifelong learning.
- **Largest Increase in Pell Grants in 20 Years.** Nearly 4 million students will receive a Pell Grant of up to \$3,000, 30% larger than when the President took office.

#### ***IMPROVING OUR NATION'S HEALTH:***

- **Protected and Strengthened Medicare, Benefiting the 22 Million American Women Enrolled in Medicare.** The Balanced Budget Act extended the life of the Medicare Trust Fund for at least a decade; expanded choices in health plans; and provided beneficiaries new preventive benefits, including more affordable annual mammograms for all beneficiaries, cervical cancer screening, and tests to help detect osteoporosis. The President has also put forth a new proposal that will provide greater access to health insurance for Americans ages 55 to 65, including an option to buy into Medicare.
- **Increased Funding for Breast Cancer Research.** Since the President took office, funding for breast cancer research, prevention and treatment has doubled, from about \$275 million in FY 1993 to \$577 million in the President's FY 1999 budget. In addition, the President has implemented the Mammography Quality Standards Act to ensure the quality of mammograms. Women can now find a certified mammography facility by calling 1-800-4-CANCER.
- **Providing Protection with the Patients' Bill of Rights.** The President is calling on Congress to pass Federally enforceable consumer health care protections that include: guaranteed access to needed health care specialists including direct access to an OB-GYN; access to emergency room services when and where the need arises; continuity of care protections to ensure that patients' care will not abruptly change if their provider is dropped; access to a timely internal and independent external appeals process for consumers to resolve their differences with their health plans; a limit on financial incentives to doctors to limit care and assurances that doctors and patients can openly discuss treatment options. Women are particularly vulnerable without these health care protections because they are greater users of health care services, they make three-quarters of the health care decisions for their families, and they have specific health care needs that are directly addressed by a patients' bill of rights.
- **Preventing Discrimination Based on Genetic Information Both by Health Plans and Employers.** Urging Congress to pass bipartisan legislation to prohibit health plans from inappropriately using genetic screening information to deny coverage, set premiums, or to distribute confidential information. The President also has supported legislation that ensures that employers do not use genetic information to discriminate against employees.
- **Fought for Greater Health Security for America's Families.** The President signed into law the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act which helps millions of Americans who move

from one job to another, who are self-employed, or who have pre-existing medical conditions keep their health insurance.

- **Endorsed Legislation That Would Ban Drive-thru Mastectomies**, allowing women to stay in the hospital at least 48 hours following a mastectomy.
- **Ended Drive-Thru Deliveries**. Proposed and signed into law legislation requiring insurers to cover at least 48 hours of a post-natal hospital stay (72 hours for a Cesarean).

#### ***MAKING OUR HOMES AND COMMUNITIES SAFER:***

- **Putting 100,000 More Police on the Streets**. At this time, nearly 80,000 officers have been funded through the 1994 Crime Bill, on the way to 100,000 more police on the streets and in our communities. And violent crime has dropped six years in a row - the longest period of decline in 60 years.
- **Signed the Assault Weapons Ban, the Brady Bill and an Extension of Brady into Law**. The Brady Law has already kept handguns away from 250,000 persons including felons, fugitives and individuals convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors or who are under restraining orders. The President signed into law the extension of the Brady Law, which prohibits anyone convicted of a domestic violence offense -- misdemeanor or felony -- from owning or possessing a firearm.
- **Will Hold the First-Ever White House Conference on School Safety**. On October 15, 1998, the President will host the White House Conference on School Safety. The participants will explore solutions to this national challenge: How do schools, families and communities work together to make sure that every child is safe in every school in America.
- **Signed Megan's Law and the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offender Registration Act**, requiring states to set up sex offender registration systems and allows community notification when sex offenders move into neighborhoods.
- **Championed and Signed the Violence Against Women Act**, the cornerstone of the President's efforts to fight domestic violence, and created an office at the Department of Justice dedicated to combating violence against women.
- **More than Tripled Funding to Domestic Violence Shelters** and instituted new penalties against men who stalk, threaten or abuse women across state lines.
- **Established Nationwide 24-Hour Domestic Violence Hotline**. The hotline (1-800-797-SAFE) provides immediate crisis intervention, counseling and referrals for those in need. Since the hotline opened, there have been 229,000 calls -- averaging 8,000 calls a month -- from all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

#### ***PROMOTING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES FOR WOMEN:***

- **Reversed the "Gag Rule"** limiting the information federally funded family planning clinics could give to women.
- **Greater Support for Family Planning**. The President's FY99 proposal will increase Title X Family Planning grants by \$15 million -- a 46 percent increase since FY92.
- **Signed the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act**, establishing a safety-zone around women's health clinics.

#### ***STRENGTHENING EQUAL EMPLOYMENT PROTECTIONS:***

- **Increasing Civil Rights Enforcement**. Proposed for the largest single increase in funding to

enforce existing civil rights laws in nearly two decades. Through new reforms and heightened commitment to enforcement, the Administration will seek to prevent discrimination before it occurs and to punish those who do discriminate in employment, education, housing and health care, and against those with disabilities. The Clinton Administration's FY99 budget contains \$602 million for civil rights enforcement agencies and offices -- an increase of \$86 million over last year's funding.

- **Increasing Funding for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).** The cornerstone of the improved civil rights enforcement effort is a \$37 million increase (15 percent) for the EEOC. Through increased use of mediation, improved information technology and an expanded investigative staff, the EEOC will reduce the average time for resolving private-sector complaints from over 9.4 months to 6 months and cut the backlog of cases from 64,000 to 28,000, by the year 2000.

#### ***GENERATING MORE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN:***

- **Women Are Starting Businesses at Twice the Rate of All Businesses.** Women own nearly 40 percent of all firms in the United States. These eight million women-owned firms employ 18.5 million —one in every five U.S. workers — and contribute \$2.3 trillion to the economy. The Small Business Administration's Office of Women's Business Ownership is working to foster this growth.
- **Tripled the Number of Small Business Loans to Women Entrepreneurs.** Between 1993 and 1997 the SBA approved nearly 50,000 loans to women entrepreneurs under the 7(a) and 504 loan programs. Last year alone, the Small Business Administration granted more than 10,000 loans, worth \$1.67 billion, to women small business owners, triple the number of loans granted in 1992.

#### ***WOMEN AS PARTNERS IN DECISION MAKING:***

- **Appointed More Women than Any Other President --** 41 percent of Administration appointees are women.
- **Women Hold 29 Percent of the Top Positions --** 29 percent of the positions requiring Senate confirmation (PAS) are held by women. Additionally,
  - ▶ 34 percent of Presidential appointments, including boards and commissions, are held by women.
  - ▶ 39 percent of non-career Senior Executive Service positions are held by women.
  - ▶ 58 percent of Schedule C positions are held by women.
- **Appointed the First Women Ever to Serve as Attorney General, Janet Reno, and Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright.** Including the Attorney General and Secretary of State, women make up 27 percent of the Clinton Cabinet: Alexis Herman, Secretary of Labor; Donna Shalala, Secretary of Health and Human Services; Carol Browner, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency; Janet Yellen, Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors; and Charlene Barshefsky, United States Trade Representative all serve in the President's Cabinet.
- **30 Percent of All of the President's Judicial Nominees Are Women.**
- **Nominated the Second Woman to Serve on the Supreme Court.** During his first year in office, President Clinton nominated Ruth Bader Ginsburg to the United States Supreme Court. Justice Ginsburg is only the second woman to serve on the nation's highest court.

## PRESIDENT CLINTON AND VICE PRESIDENT GORE: STANDING UP FOR A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE

*"I'm committed to keeping abortions safe, legal, and accessible -and to making it more rare...I will continue to do everything I can to make sure that every child in America is a wanted child, raised in a loving, strong family."*

President Bill Clinton, January 22, 1998

Throughout his Presidency, President Clinton and Vice President Gore have worked hard to protect a woman's right to choose and to promote safe reproductive health services for women.

**Provided Contraceptive Coverage to More than a Million Women.** The FY99 Omnibus Appropriations Act contains an important policy breakthrough on reproductive choice. The final bill requires the 300 Federal Employees Health Benefits Plans (FEHBP) to cover contraceptive drugs and devices, providing coverage to approximately 1.2 million women of childbearing age. Until now, only 19% of federal health plans covered prescription contraceptives and 10% of the plans offered no contraceptive coverage at all. The Republican Leadership tried to remove this measure, but President Clinton and pro-choice members remained firm.

**Increased Funding for Family Planning.** In the FY99 Omnibus Appropriations Act, the President won an increase of \$12 million over FY98 levels for family planning services or Title X Family Planning grants. The House-version would have denied any additional funds.

**Stopped the Coburn Amendment Which Would Have Prohibited the FDA from Approving RU-486.** On January 22, 1993, President Clinton reversed the ban on the importation of Mifepristone or RU-486; RU-486 is currently under review by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Unfortunately, the FDA's scientific drug approval process became under assault in the 105th Congress. President Clinton threatened to veto a provision that would have prevented the FDA from using government funds to test, develop or approve drugs that may induce medical abortion, including RU-486. Because of the President's veto threat, Republicans backed down and decided not to attach this provision to any funding bill.

**Defeated Parental Consent Restrictions on Contraceptives for Minors.** The House voted to require minors to obtain parental consent prior to receiving any Title X family planning services (this has also been referred to as the Istook amendment). The President's veto threat helped to keep it out of the final bill.

**Stopped the So-Called "Child Custody Protection" Act.** Senior Clinton Administration Advisers recommended a veto of this bill which would have made it illegal to transport a minor across State lines for the purpose of avoiding parental consent or notification laws. The Clinton Administration, as detailed in the Statement of Administration Policy, was very concerned that the bill did not protect close family members --including grandmothers, aunts and siblings --from criminal and civil liability. Family members could face criminal charges for aiding a relative in distress. The bill also did not protect persons that only provide information, counseling, referral or medical services to the minor from liability. Under a veto threat, the Senate failed to invoke cloture (or end debate) on the Child Custody Protection Act.

**Upheld the Late Term Abortion Veto.** This year, the House of Representatives voted to override President Clinton's veto of a bill banning certain late-term abortions, known by proponents of the ban as "partial birth abortions." While the House voted to override the President's action, the Senate sustained the veto by a vote of 36-64 --just three votes short of the required two-thirds majority needed to override the veto. President Clinton vetoed the measure in October 1997 because it did not contain an exception that protected the health or life of the woman.

**Continued to Fight Restrictions on International Family Planning.** The FY99 Omnibus Appropriations Act does not contain the so-called "Mexico City" policy, a provision that denies U.S. funds to international family planning organizations that use their own resources to perform abortions or lobby on abortion policy. The Mexico City restrictions were also included in the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act. President Clinton vetoed this legislation because it contained these unacceptable restrictions.

**President Clinton Calls for Passage of Equal Pay Legislation and  
Releases Council of Economic Advisers' Report on the Wage Gap**

June 10, 1998

Today, President Clinton will commemorate the 35th anniversary of President Kennedy's signing of the Equal Pay Act and will urge passage of legislation to strengthen the laws that prohibit wage discrimination against women. In addition, the President will release a Council of Economic Advisers' (CEA) report on the gender wage gap, and announce a Department of Labor report that provides a historical perspective of the wage gap. The President will be joined by Dr. Dorothy Height, President Emeritus of the National Council of Negro Women, who also attended the signing ceremony for the Equal Pay Act on June 10, 1963.

*supported legislation to assure equal pay*  
**Legislation to Improve Enforcement of Wage Discrimination Laws.** ~~The President~~ will call on Congress to pass legislation, introduced by Senator Tom Daschle and Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, to strengthen laws prohibiting wage discrimination. Highlights of this legislation include:

*The Admin*  
① **Increased Penalties for the Equal Pay Act (EPA).** The legislation adds full compensatory and punitive damages as remedies, in addition to the liquidated damages and back pay awards currently available under the EPA. This proposal would put gender-based wage discrimination on equal footing with wage discrimination based on race or ethnicity, for which uncapped compensatory and punitive damages are already available.

*that*  
**Non-retaliation provision.** The bill would prohibit employers from punishing employees for sharing salary information with their co-workers. Currently, employers are free to take action against employees who share wage information. ~~Without the ability to learn about wage disparities, it is difficult for women to evaluate whether there is wage discrimination.~~

*A*  
**Training, Research, and Pay Equity Award.** The Daschle-DeLauro bill provides for increased training for Equal Employment Opportunity Commission employees on matters involving the discrimination of wages; research on discrimination in the payment of wages; and the establishment of the "The National Award for Pay Equity in the Workplace," which will recognize and promote the achievements of employers that have made strides to eliminate pay disparities.

**CEA Report on the Wage Gap.** The President will announce a report by the CEA that shows that a significant gap between the wages of women and men remains today although it has narrowed substantially since the signing of the Equal Pay Act.

Gender Pay Gap Has Narrowed: Today, Women Earn 75 Cents for Every Dollar Men Earn. In 1963, when the Equal Pay Act was signed, women earned 58 cents for every dollar men earned. Today, women earn about 75 cents for every dollar men earn -- a 29-percent increase over the 1963 levels. The gender gap has narrowed more rapidly among younger women and among married women with children. And relative to all male workers, wage gains have been faster for black and white women than for Hispanic women.

Rise in Work Experience And Move To Higher-Paying Jobs Explain Part of Narrowing of Wage Gap. Over the past 20 years, increases in women's average work experience and movement into higher-paying occupations have played a major role in increasing women's pay relative to men's. Changes in family status, in industry structure, and unionization have also

worked to narrow the wage gap, while the rising returns to skills and increased wage inequality would have, by themselves, widened the pay gap.

Much of Gender Gap Is "Unexplained." In the 1980s, about one-third of the gender pay gap was explained by differences in the skills and experience that women bring to the labor market and about 28 percent was due to differences in industry, occupation, and union status among men and women. This leaves over one-third of the gender pay gap "unexplained" by factors such as educational attainment, work experience, and occupational choice.

Labor Market Discrimination Persists. The evidence is that labor market discrimination against women persists. One indirect and rough measure of the extent of discrimination remaining in the labor market is the "unexplained" difference in pay. And academic studies -- whether looking at pay differences between men and women in very similar jobs or by comparing pay to specific measures of productivity -- have consistently found evidence of ongoing discrimination in the labor market.

**Department of Labor Report Provides a Historical Perspective on the Wage Gap.** The President also will announce a Department of Labor report that provides a thirty-five year perspective on the wage gap. This report focuses on three periods since the signing of the Equal Pay Act -- 1960-1975, 1975-1985, and 1985-1997 -- and highlights the increased participation of women in the labor force, the changing occupations of women, and the emergence of more women-owned businesses.

Women's Labor Force Participation Has Increased. Women's labor force participation rate rose from 37.7 percent in 1960 to almost 60 percent in 1997.

Increased Contributions by Women to Family Income. Between 1995 and 1996 alone, the number of families with two working parents increased by nearly half a million, making equal pay even more of a family issue. In these years, both parents were employed in 63.9 percent of married-couple families with children 18 and younger, while 28.2 percent of these families had an employed father and homemaker mother.

## THE CLINTON/GORE ADMINISTRATION: HELPING WOMEN IN BUSINESS

"Women continue to break the glass ceiling, changing their status from employees to employer. Today, women-owned businesses are creating one out of every four jobs in the United States. From the classroom to the board room, women now occupy every part of the workforce, building the kinds of lives for themselves and their families that are the heart of the American Dream."

President Clinton

*The Administration*  
✓ Recognizing the importance of ~~women in business~~, President Clinton and Vice President Gore have worked hard to institute policies and programs which help expand this important sector. Experts estimate that there are now 8 million women-owned firms in the United States, employing over 18 million people and contributing some \$2.3 trillion in sales and revenues to the economy. Women are the fastest growing segment of small business owners, starting businesses at twice the rate of men. Women now own and operate close to 40% of all small companies and employ one in four U.S. workers. The Clinton-Gore administration has greatly increased SBA's financial, technical and management assistance to women business owners.

**LOANS:** Since FY '92, SBA-backed loans to women have more than tripled and increased in dollar value by 187% - that is, more than 59,000 loans amounting to \$8.89 billion for women-owned businesses. In FY '98 alone, SBA backed 11,084 loans worth \$1.82 billion to women entrepreneurs. Women business owners have received 45 percent of all SBA loans under the Microloan Program since its inception in 1992. This program provides loans of up to \$25,000, in addition to management and technical assistance to help ensure success. The average Microloan is about \$10,000 and creates 1.5 new jobs.

**WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTERS:** A unique public-private partnership providing community-directed business and technical training targeted to women, there are more than 69 Women's Business Centers in 38 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. They provide long-term training, counseling, networking and mentoring, to potential and existing entrepreneurs. President Clinton's proposed budget for SBA in FY '99 doubles funding for Women's Business Centers, to fulfill Administrator Aida Alvarez's goal of opening a center in every state.

**NEW PROGRAMS:** In consultation with women entrepreneurs, the SBA developed loan programs that are especially helpful to them:

Women's Pre-Qualification Loan Program: Helps women through the loan application process and pre-qualifies them before they apply to the bank. Launched as a pilot in 1994, 1,084 loans totaling \$103 million have been made under the program since that time.

SBA Low Doc and SBA Express: In September 1998, President Clinton announced the expansion of the SBA Low Doc loan program and the new SBA Express, which simplifies the process for those seeking smaller loans. The SBA Express program includes a \$25,000 revolving, uncollateralized line of credit -- a feature requested by women business owners.

Venture Capital: This year the SBA licensed the first women-owned venture capital firms in SBA's Small Business Investment Company Program and the first to base their investment strategies on helping women-owned companies. The two raised a combined \$14.2 million in private capital to help small companies in their formative period. With additional SBA-backed funding -- up to \$42.6 million -- these new SBICs be a strong presence in the venture capital industry and will help to create growth and new jobs.

Public/Partnerships: Just this month SBA signed formal partnership agreements with 11 leading business and professional women's organizations (including Business and Professional Women/USA, National

Association of Women Business Owners/ National Federation of Black Women Business Owners, and the YWCA) representing more than 2 million women. They will work to support and empower women entrepreneurs by increasing the participation of women-owned businesses in SBA's capital access, procurement, business training and other programs.

**Government Contracts:** In an unprecedented effort to increase government contracting opportunities for women business owners, the SBA entered into partnership agreements with five other federal agencies. The Departments of State, Defense, Transportation, Health and Human Services, and the General Services Administration will commit to specific strategies to help reach the president's government-wide 5 percent contracting goal for women business owners.

**SBA ONLINE:** In 1998, Vice President Gore launched the SBA's OnLine Women's Business Center, a free interactive website which offers women who want to start or grow a business information on best business principles and practices, management techniques, networking, industry news, market research and more. Check it out at | HYPERLINK <http://www.onlinewbc.org> ~~www.onlinewbc.org~~. The OnLine Women's Business Center is now available in Spanish. The Office of Women's Business Ownership (OWBO) has its own home page, providing Most Commonly Asked Questions, program summaries, and hotlinks to more than 40 related websites. Visit OWBO at [www.sba.gov/womeninbusiness](http://www.sba.gov/womeninbusiness).

**MENTORING:** The OWBO, in conjunction with counselors from the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), the SBA's 69 district offices, and Women's Business Centers, organize mentoring opportunities for current and aspiring women business owners through the Women ,s Network for Entrepreneurial Training. Both peer-group and one-on-one mentoring is available.

**MINORITY ENTERPRISE:** Between 1987 and 1996, the number of minority women-owned firms increased by 153 percent, employment grew by 276 percent and revenues rose by 318 percent. The number of firms owned by Hispanic women more than tripled (206 percent), the number of Asian/Native American/Alaska Native women-owned firms more than doubled (138 percent) and the number of firms owned by African-American women more than doubled (135 percent). Of the 6,183 small businesses in the SBA's 8(a) Minority Enterprise Development Program, women own 1,142 firms. Women business owners received more than \$1.2 billion in federal contracts under the program in FY 1997.

**WELFARE-TO-WORK:** The SBA has assumed a major leadership role in the President's Welfare-to-Work initiative by working to help small businesses meet their work force needs with job-ready former welfare recipients, and to move more women from welfare to work. SBA set a goal of 200,000 welfare to work commitments by the year 2000 - a combination of small business referrals to welfare to work job training programs and individuals trained to be entrepreneurs. Currently we have achieved more than 50% of this goal! For more information, check out our web site at [www.sba.gov/welfare](http://www.sba.gov/welfare).

**THE WHITE HOUSE**  
**Office of the Press Secretary**

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For Immediate Release

March 11, 1998

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
AND THE FIRST LADY  
ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The East  
Room

2:47 P.M. EST

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you and welcome to the East Room of the White House for this very important occasion. The President and I are pleased to be joined by so many people who have worked tirelessly to lift up the lives of women and girls here and around the world.

There are so many of you, I wish I could acknowledge every single one of you. I'm unable to do that and so let me just acknowledge a few of you. In addition to those who have already been introduced, I'm delighted that Secretary Shalala is here, accompanied by her counterpart, the Russian Minister of Health, as part of their continuing negotiations; Administrator Browner; Administrator Barshefsky. And we're pleased to have two members of Congress, two others were unable to stay, but I'm delighted that Congresswoman Pelosi and Congresswoman Millender-McDonald are here. And we're sorry that Congresswoman Lofgren and Morello were unable to stay. But thank you both for coming.

The Administration of USAID, Brian Atwood; Deputy Secretary of Labor Kitty Higgins; USIA Director Joe Duffy; VOA Director Evelyn Lieberman; Ambassador Linda Tarr-Whelan; Theresa Loar who is the senior coordinator for International Women's Issues and Director of the President's Interagency Council on Women. And we're also pleased that we're joined by the United Nations Deputy Secretary General Louise Frechette.

In addition, I look out at this audience and see so many of you who have been advocates and workers in the trenches and on the front lines on behalf of human rights and women's rights for many, many years. And we are grateful that you could be here today in honor of International Women's Day.

We have come together this afternoon to celebrate what we have done and what we must still do to ensure that all over this Earth women's rights are protected, women's voices are heard, and women's full participation is guaranteed.

Next week, the United Nations Human Rights Commission will gather in Geneva to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and honor all who are helping to fulfill its promise. Woven into that document are timeless beliefs that must always set the standard for how we treat each other in every part of the world. The Declaration puts it simply: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity

'and right. All human beings -- not just men, not just those particular skin colors or religions. And on International Women's Day, we want to commit ourselves to expanding the circle of human dignity to encompass all human beings -- men and women, boys and girls.

At the United Nations 4th World Conference on Women, I remember very well looking out at delegates from 189 different countries, all united by a common vision. And look at the progress we have made in fulfilling how that vision became an agenda and then acting on that agenda. Even in the short time since Beijing, governments, nongovernmental organizations and individuals have made tremendous progress.

I have met women all over the world, as many of you have, who are working to end domestic violence, who are working to bring microcredit into every village that can be reached. I have seen women who, all of a sudden, are for the first time in their lives able to access health care. And I've heard and seen many eloquent women and men speaking out on the importance of recognizing women's rights.

I've also been very impressed by those of you who have worked to remind us of how much we have yet to do and how much our country, the United States, can contribute to the unfinished agenda. Our nation's assistance and leadership is essential. I have visited women's health care clinics that we have helped open in Central Asia. I have talked with refugees from war and genocide who are rebuilding their lives in Rwanda and Bosnia, thanks to our assistance. I have learned about a joint campaign to warn women and girls in Ukraine about those who might exploit them through trafficking. All because our government, universities, hospitals, businesses, NGOs, citizens, all are committed to expanding that circle of human dignity to every woman.

So we may celebrate today, but we also should challenge ourselves, for there is much more to be done. If the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is going to keep its promise to all women, then all women must hear that message and be empowered to act on it.

One of the most moving experiences I had was in New Delhi, when I met a young Indian woman who gave me a poem she had written. And in it she said: Too many women in too many countries speak the same language of silence. There must be freedom if we are to speak, and, yes, there must be power if we are to be heard. We must give voice to women in Afghanistan, where women are brutalized and silenced by the Taliban -- (applause) -- where girls are barred from school, where thousands of women cannot go to work, leave home alone or get the health care they need. And where those who don't follow every rule of attire or conduct are punished with beatings, whippings, even death. We must give voice to the more than one million women who are trafficked every year in the former Soviet Union and all around the world. (Applause.)

These women and girls are desperate for economic opportunity. They think they're applying for jobs as babysitters, waitresses and sales clerks. Many think they are following their dreams and, instead, they find themselves in a nightmare, sold as part of an international trade in human beings and forced into modern day slavery. Imprisoned by employers, they are often not seen, let alone heard. Lured by organized crime operations, they represent an international problem that, like drug trafficking, requires an international solution.

We must give voice to women plagued by violence in all its forms. It doesn't matter if it's by law or custom, ignorance or inaction. It doesn't matter if it's in war or peace, in our homes or our streets. No woman should ever be degraded by violence. And violence against women must never again be pushed aside as trivial or explained away as cultural. Let us call it what it is. (Applause.) Violence against women is a violation of human rights. (Applause.)

And as we work to give voice to all women, let us judge ourselves not only by what we choose to say, by not only what we choose to see, but by what we choose to do in our nation and around the world.

And few people have done more for women and girls than our next speaker. Through her words, her deeds and her leadership, Secretary Madeleine Albright has ensured that the issues affecting women are exactly what they should be -- a part of American foreign policy and an international priority.

Please join me in welcoming Secretary Albright. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you very much, Doctor. And to all our distinguished guests here today, let me welcome you and say that I have rarely enjoyed anything in this room as much as I have what has already happened.

I've told this story before, but I feel just like I did the first time I gave remarks, a speech, as a public official. It was at one of these civic banquets, and it started at 6:00 p.m. in the evening. Everyone in the audience was introduced, hundreds of people -- except three people and they went home mad. (Laughter.) Five people spoke before me. I got up to speak at a quarter to 10:00, and the man who introduced me did not do nearly as good a job as our distinguished guest from Thailand -- he said, "You know, you could stop here and have had a very nice evening." (Laughter.) Well, we could certainly stop here and have had a very fine occasion.

Let me begin by thanking the Secretary General for being here. We've had a very good meeting, just before we came over here to talk about our shared goal of preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and of securing Iraq's compliance with its obligations under the U.N. Security Council resolutions.

The Secretary General deserves the thanks of all Americans for securing the agreement with the Iraqi government to open all sites for inspection. (Applause.) The commitments made to him as well as last week's successful U.N. inspections in sites that had previously been closed are quite significant. They must be carried out. The last six days must be replicated in the coming six months. And the United States must remain vigilant to see that that occurs.

Let me say, since we're honoring women today, in case you all missed it and you want to be reminded what the stakes are in what is going on now, I commend to you the Op-Ed article from the distinguished British physician in the hometown paper here today, discussing the consequences of the use of chemical weapons.

Mr. Secretary General, your work is important, and we intend to see that you succeed. (Applause.)

Let me also say that the United Nations is an invaluable partner in an increasingly interdependent world where we have to work together on things, as evidenced by the presence here today of members of the Diplomatic Corps, the Russian Health Minister, our distinguished physician from Thailand, and so many people from the U.N., and those of you in NGOs who work around the world. If the United States expects to continue to exercise a leadership role in a way that benefits our own people in the 21st century, we have got to pay our U.N. dues and fulfill our responsibilities. (Applause.)

The Secretary General has supported the reform of the U.N. in positive ways, and I'm doing my best to get legislation through the Congress, which will fulfill our responsibilities to the United Nations, to the IMF, to the cause of U.N. reform.

I'm very proud to be here with all of you today to celebrate your progress and to chart our course to the future. I especially thank the members of Congress who are here and those whom they represent who couldn't be present for their support and leadership. I thank the First Lady, the Secretary of State, and the Attorney General for the accomplishments of the last five years. I think it's fair to say that as long as I live, I will always look back on the First Lady's speech at Beijing as one of the high-water marks of our public service in this White House. (Applause.)

You know, we always say that human rights must be a central pillar of America's foreign policy, but that is meaningless if those rights are not fully enjoyed by half the people on the planet. Secretary Albright has already discussed our assistance to Afghan women and girls who have suffered much under the Taliban. Today I want to announce some further actions to advance your cause and our cause.

First, I'm instructing Secretary Albright and our AID Administrator, Brian Atwood, to expand our international efforts to combat violence against women. All too often, we know violence limits the choices open to women and young girls, damaging their health, disrupting their lives, obstructing their full participation in society. We will provide \$10 million to strengthen partnerships with governments and NGOs to help them to fight violence against women everywhere. (Applause.)

Second, I am launching a variety of steps to combat the inhumane practice of trafficking of women. I've asked our Attorney General to make sure that our own laws are adequate to the task we face here at home; that trafficking is prevented, victims are protected, traffickers are punished. And we will use our consular and law enforcement presence in other nations to combat trafficking worldwide, to assist victims, improve legislation, train judges and law enforcement in other lands. We will step up our public education campaigns abroad in an attempt to stop trafficking at its source.

Secretary Albright has already discussed her partnership with the government of Ukraine to jointly develop a comprehensive strategy to fight trafficking to and from that country with the hope that our cooperation will become a model for other nations across the globe.

Finally, I have asked my Interagency Council on Women to convene an international conference to cast a spotlight on this human rights atrocity and develop new strategies to combat it. One important tool, as the Secretary General has reminded us, for making progress on these issues is the Women's Human Rights Treaty, the U.N. convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. It has the cumbersome acronym of CEDAW, but its message is very simple.

Again, I thank the Secretary General for his leadership. I ask you to think about this convention and its impact. It has a proven record of helping women around the world to combat violence, gain economic opportunity, strike against discriminatory laws. Its provisions are consistent with United States law, which already provides strong protections for women. It offers a means for reviewing and encouraging other nations' compliance.

Yet, because of our historic and often manifest allergy to joining international conventions, we remain alone in our hemisphere, alone among the industrialized nations of the world, apart from 161 other nations alongside nations like Sudan and North Korea in not ratifying this treaty.

This is not an issue of party, but of principle. Today, I am sending a letter to the Senate leadership asking them to ratify the treaty. And I ask the Senate -- (applause) -- I ask the Senate to do so this year. We signed this treaty in the late 1970s. Finally, after we took office, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted the treaty out of committee with a bipartisan vote in 1994. If we are going to be true to our own legacy of leadership in human rights, we must ratify this treaty. (Applause.)

When you look ahead to this new century and new millennium and you ask yourselves what you would like the story of the next 100 years to be, surely all of us want one big chapter to be about how, finally, in all nations of the world, people of all races and ethnic groups, of many different religious persuasions and cultural practices came together to guarantee that every young girl got a chance to grow up to live up to the fullest of her abilities and to live out her dreams. Let that be our mission as we leave today.

·Thank you and God bless you. (Applause.)



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**THE WHITE HOUSE**  
**Office of the Press Secretary**  
**(Westport, Connecticut)**

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For Immediate Release

March 10, 1998

**REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
TO THE BRIDGEPORT COMMUNITY**

Housatonic Community Technical College  
Bridgeport, Connecticut

11:30 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. First of all, I think Pamela did a terrific job with her speech. And secondly, when Anthony stood up, I thought to myself, in a few years Congressman Shays will be retiring and I -- (laughter) -- may be looking at his successor right there. He was great. (Applause.) I love it. Senator Dodd, you might want to hire him as a consultant this year. (Laughter.)

Mr. Mayor, I'm delighted to be back in Bridgeport with you and Jennifer and the officials of the city government. I thank Senator Dodd and Congressman Shays and Representatives Barbara Kennelly and Rose DeLauro for joining us today. Attorney General Blumenthal, Treasurer Paul Sylvester, Speaker Ritter and members of the legislature.

Like Senator Dodd, I want to extend my condolences on behalf of Hillary and myself to the families of the victims of the shooting incident in Newington and our prayers are with them.

And like Senator Dodd, on a happier note, I want to congratulate Connecticut for getting both its teams into the NCAA. (Laughter.) So did Arkansas. (Laughter.) Thank goodness we don't have a contest anytime soon, And what Senator Dodd didn't say is that UCON's men's team is actually playing in Washington this week. And so I think you all should keep score and see which members of your congressional delegation show up to root the home team on. (Laughter.)

I'm glad to be back in Bridgeport. I really like this community and I have admired the courage with which the people here have struggled in the tough years and moved to move the community forward. I should tell you -- whenever I come to a place you all notice that there are a few members of the press who come with me. (Laughter.) And sometimes it seems that we're on opposite sides of the line, but you should know that one member of the press, Larry McQuillan, who works for Reuters New Service, and is actually the President of the White House Press Corps this year, is from Bridgeport. He will write a totally biased, favorable story -- (laughter) -- about this wonderful college and child care program today, I can assure you. (Applause.)

I want to thank President Wurtz for showing me around the school and the unbelievable art collection here, which you should be very proud of. And I want to thank Marie Nulty for taking me through the wonderful pre-school program.

In the Early Childhood Lab Schools Parent Handbook there is the following quote: "A child is like a butterfly in the wind. Some can fly higher than others, but each one flies the best it can. Each one is special. Each one is different. Each one is beautiful." After going through this child care center, it seems to me that that is a motto that every teacher I saw lived and worked by, and that every child I met was made to feel special every day.

The reason I came here today is twofold: First of all, because of the extraordinary leadership for children and especially on the child care center issue -- child care issue, Senator Dodd, along with the members of your House delegation who are here, who have been terrific on this issue. And second, because what I see here today is what I believe every child in America needs, and it's important that we graphically demonstrate to the country that with so many parents in the work force are going back to school, there is a crying unmet need which the Mayor graphically and numerically demonstrated in his remarks just here in Bridgeport, all over the country for the kind of high-quality child that you offer here.

Today we have to make a commitment to extend that option to every family in America that needs it. I want to talk about what we in the federal government can do on our own to improve child care at federal centers, but most importantly, I want to talk about what Congress should do in the next 70 days to help every working family give their children the kind of child care we see here.

As has been said already, these are good times for America. We have 15 million new jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in 24 years, the lowest inflation rate in 30 years, the highest home ownership rate in history, the lowest welfare rolls in 27 years, the lowest crime rate in 24 years. And I'm proud of it. (Applause.) These numbers only matter insofar as they reflect differences in the lives of ordinary Americans -- a different life story that can be told. The reason I was proud to be introduced by Pamela Price is that she embodies the changing story of America over the last five years, and that's what we want for every American who's willing to work for it.

In last year's historic balanced budget agreement we provided a child care tax credit of \$500 per child for families; expanded health care coverage to 5 million more children in lower income working families who don't have access to it now; and perhaps most important, have virtually opened the doors of college to all Americans. For example -- and you can compare it, what it means here at Housatonic -- in the last years we have added 300,000 work-study slots, hundreds of thousands of more scholarships; we've made the interest on student loans tax deductible; 100,000 young people have worked their way through college or earned money for college by serving in AmeriCorps in community service projects. You can now save for a college education in an IRA and withdraw from the IRA tax free if the money is used for a college education.

But most important, now there is a \$1,500 tax credit -- that's not a deduction, a credit -- a reduction of your tax bill for the first two years of college; and a lifetime learning credit that is substantial, but not quite that large for junior and senior years, for job training programs, for graduate schools. I think we can really say that insofar as community-based institutions like this are concerned, we have opened the doors of college to all Americans who are willing to work for it. And that is a profoundly important achievement for our country.

Senator Dodd talked about what the Family and Medical Leave Act means. The American Dream is now in reach for more and more families. And that is a very, very good thing. But as you heard Pamela say, what made all this work for her as she was struggling to put her life on track was knowing that her child would be in a safe, healthy, positive child care environment. And if we really want to open the doors of opportunity to all Americans, we not only have to finish our agenda of bringing job opportunities and business opportunities into every neighborhood and every city like Bridgeport in America, we have to make sure that if the jobs and the educational opportunities are open the parents can actually go without having to worry that they're neglecting their children.

We can never have a country that is fully successful if millions of people every day get up and look forward to a day in which they are terrified that they will have to make a choice between being a responsible parent and a good worker or a good student. If we have to choose, we lose. Society has no more important work than raising children. If everyone did that successfully, I think we would all agree we'd have less than half the problems we have today.

On the other hand, this economic boom we celebrate was fueled by having nearly two-thirds of the American adults in the work force; the highest percentage of people in the work force in history. That's how you get a low unemployment rate. Well, by definition, a lot of those folks are parents with children who have to be supervised, and nourished, and supported and helped.

So when you think about this child care issue, if you look at the way I do, not just as President, but as a parent and as someone who's worked all his life, I say to myself, we cannot have a country that asks people to make a choice between succeeding at home and succeeding at work, and insofar as we have to choose, we lose. When we know we can succeed at home and at work because of an effective child care center, every American wins. The country wins. We're stronger in the 21st century. Our families are stronger, our economies are stronger, they reinforce each other. That's really what this child care issue is all about.

Now, we've worked hard on this for the last five years. We've helped a million more parents to pay -- or the parents of a million more children to pay for child care. But obviously -- remember the Mayor's numbers for Bridgeport -- there is a huge amount of work to be done here. And today, we're releasing a report that confirms the overwhelming need still existing all across America. The report shows that states have come up with a lot of innovative ideas, and the Congress allocated \$4 billion more to states for child care as a part of welfare reform. But even with all that, it is clear that the resources are simply not there yet to meet the needs of all the families in America. States have been forced to turn away literally thousands upon thousands of low income families.

In Connecticut, the State Child Care Bureau has to restrict its aid to families on welfare or teen parents in high school. They've actually stopped taking applications from families that are so-called "working poor" altogether.

So here we are at a time of unprecedented prosperity, when people at the lower end of the income scale are finally beginning to get pay rises and have some security in their jobs, but we know they can't afford quality child care without help. So here we are at a time, the best of times for our country, and yet we still have millions of people getting up every day, going to work worrying about their children. We are forcing them to make choices that no family should have to make, that no country should tolerate, and that we will pay for down the road sooner or later. So what we want to do is pay for it now, the right way and have a good, positive environment. (Applause.)

Now, let me say some of the things that I intend to do with the federal child care centers. We care, the federal government cares in its child care centers for some 215,000 children. That's quite a few. We want them to be a model for the nation.

Today, I'm going to direct my Cabinet to do four things. First, to make all the centers fully accredited by the year 2000. (Applause.) Now, what does that mean, in terms of quality of facilities, training for workers and child-to-staff ratios? Today, believe it or not, 76 percent of our military child care centers are already accredited, but only 35 percent of our non-military centers are. We'll make both categories 100 percent in the next 700 days.

Second, we have to make sure that all the centers conduct thorough background checks on workers. In too many states there is no checking to see if the people we trust with our children are even trustworthy in the eyes of the law. Connecticut is one of the few states that

actually does require a criminal background check of child care workers. Every state should do it and the federal government should certainly do it.

Third, we have to make sure that all federal workers know about all their child care benefits and options in the first place. And, finally, we're going to do more work with the private sector to make federal child care better and more affordable.

If we do all that, there will still be millions of kids out there and their parents who need help. In the balanced budget I have presented to Congress for this year, I've proposed a comprehensive and responsible plan to strengthen child care. There will be other proposals to do the same thing.

Now, Congress is only going to meet about 70 more days this year. I know you say, well, it's only March, but anyway that's -- in Washington, Congress plans to only sit about 70 more days. Now, there is enormous support, I believe, among people in both parties in our country and I believe among people in both parties in the Congress for taking action on child care. I have a plan and there are others which would double the number of children receiving child care subsidies, at a million or more new kids, give tax cuts to businesses which provide child care, expand child care tax credits to 3 million working families, and improve the standards of child care centers and provide more funds to train -- adequately train -- workers in child care centers. (Applause.)

We're not talking about peanuts here. Let me tell you what we're talking about. The tax credits that we will offer, if Congress would pass them, would mean that a family of four living on up to \$35,000 a year that has high child care bills would not pay any federal income tax. That would be a terrific incentive to help working families afford quality child care. And for lower income working families who don't owe any federal income tax anyway, if we increase the block grant going to the states, it goes to subsidized care for lower income working families; plus the money that we have given the states for people moving from welfare to work -- we will be able to make a huge dent in this problem.

If Congress acts, we can make child care safer as well as more affordable. We can even give scholarships under our plan to talented care-givers to train more people. We also can expand after school programs to keep 500,000 more kids, when they get a little older, off our streets and out of trouble after school. I think that's very important. (Applause.)

As I said, there are only 70 days left. There are always with something this big some controversy around the edges of the issue. But all these things can be resolved if the Congress will make up its mind to act. Because these 70 days of meetings where they can vote will be spread over most of the year. There's still time for committee meetings, for staff to do their work, for all that kind of stuff to happen. We can do this. We do not need to wait another year just because this is an election year to pass this. We need to do this now. (Applause.)

The other thing I want to say that's related to this is that Congress must pass comprehensive tobacco legislation to reduce teen smoking and raise the price of cigarettes by up to \$1.50 a pack -- (applause) -- impose strong penalties on companies that continue to advertise to children, and give the FDA full authority to regulate tobacco products and children's access to them. The revenues we raise from the tobacco company would help to make a partial contribution to the child care plan that I have proposed as well. (Applause.)

Again I say, there's some controversy, there's some issues that have to be resolved in this tobacco settlement, to get the legislation. But I want to, again, graphically illustrate -- I just watched all those little kids in that room, those two rooms, these beautiful children -- every single day, even though it is illegal in every state in America, 3,000 more children begin to smoke; 1,000 of those 3,000 children will die sooner because of that decision. Hardly anybody becomes a chronic, lifetime smoker who does not start in their teenage years.

• So I know there are only 70 days left and I know this is a big bill. But I know that there are Democrats and Republicans in substantial numbers who want to do this. We should not let the calendar get in the way of the urgent need for action. We can pass the child care reforms and we can fund them. And we can pass the tobacco legislation and we must. Just think about it: 1,000 kids every day that wants -- just like all these children did in here. Just think about it, every single day. There is no need to wait. There is no excuse for waiting. The time to act is now. (Applause.)

I leave you with this thought. I'm glad you clapped when I said these are good times for America. And you ought to be proud of yourselves, because the whole country helped to create these good times. And the efforts that we make in different areas -- from the economy to crime to welfare reform to early childhood to health and education -- they all reinforce each other. But sometimes when times are good and people clap and they feel good, they relax. I tell you, when times are good, but challenges are large and the future is coming at you like a fast train down a track -- and that's how the 21st century is coming at you, with things changing more rapidly than ever before -- then an obligation is imposed to use the good times to act, not to relax.

So I say to all of you, the members of Congress who are here are ready to act, so give them all a pat on the back, but do everything you can to send a clear and unambiguous signal that you do not want the election year to be a relaxation year, you want it to be a legislating year for the children of this country to make them stronger in the new century. After all, it's only 700 days away. Let's spend 70 days to make sure that in 700 days we'll have the healthiest, strongest children in the history of our nation.

Thank you and God bless you. (Applause.)



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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 27, 1998

REMARKS AT ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION  
ON WOMEN AND RETIREMENT SECURITY

The East Room

2:30 P.M. EST

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the President I want to welcome all of you. Please be seated.

I want to acknowledge members of the President's Cabinet and team here: the Secretary of Labor, Alexis Herman; the Deputy Secretary of Labor, Kitty Higgins; the Director of Office of Personnel Management, Janice Lachance; the Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors, Janet Yellen; the Director of the National Economic Council, Gene Sperling; and the Deputy Director, Sally Katzen; also the Deputy Social Security Commissioner, Jane Ross; and the Deputy OMB Director, Sylvia Mathews. And we're pleased to be joined by Congressman Ben Cardin and also Betty Freidan and other distinguished guests who are present with us today. We're very grateful to all of you for being here.

And in particular we are focusing today on what to do to strengthen Social Security for the 21st century and to strengthen it especially for the millions of American women who depend on it and who depend on it more than men.

We would like to say a special word of thanks to those who are joining us from around the country by way of satellite here today. I guess that's the satellite hook-up there. We welcome people from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Kansas City, Denver, Seattle, Birmingham, and Richmond, California. We're honored that you're here. And, incidentally, we had first hoped to hold this important roundtable last week. And as you may have noticed and you may remember, President Clinton had a sleepless night for about 40 hours there with Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Yasser Arafat and their delegations. They were putting the finishing touches on that agreement that takes such an important new step towards peace in the Middle East. And because of that this was rescheduled.

Mr. President, I have a feeling that not only is everybody here understanding of that, but, again, congratulations and thank you for that important agreement. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: So we're picking up today where we left off back a week ago. And it reminds me of how many important things have taken place right here in this room. Nearly a month ago I was proud to stand here in this room with President Clinton for the announcement that America had posted its first budget surplus since Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. And at that point, and actually, long before that surplus materialized, it seemed like everybody had a different idea about what should be done with the budget surplus.

But President Clinton ended that debate with four memorable words in his State of the Union address at the beginning of this year -- save Social Security first. That expression has forestalled the spending or wasting or use in any way of that budget surplus until we can save Social Security first. It would have been easy to join in with those who had risky budget-busting tax schemes or some other idea for using that money. But for the generation of Americans who saved Private Ryan, President Clinton committed us to saving Social Security first. And that's what we're going to do with the budget surplus.

That leadership couldn't have come at a better time, because over the next decade projections show more than \$1.5 trillion in surpluses for Social Security. But consider this: 75 million baby boomers are going to be retiring over the next 15 to 20 years. Today there are more than 3 people working for each Social Security beneficiary, and by the year 2030 there will be only 2 people working for each Social Security beneficiary. That's just the fundamental fact of life that we have to adjust to. And it constitutes a serious challenge. By reserving the surplus until we fix Social Security, we can meet that challenge in a way that preserves the dignity of our seniors in retirement.

We all know that it's a lifeline for millions of Americans and especially women. And older women, on average, get more than half of their income from Social Security. For 25 percent of elderly women, a Social Security check is the only income they receive.

And of course, this is not just a story of numbers and statistics, it is also one of faces and families. And I want to acknowledge and introduce to you the people who will be joining us on this panel today: Bernice Myer, from Seattle. Bernice works with older Americans and disable seniors, helping them with personal care, shopping and cleaning. She expects to receive a small pension from a previous job when she retires in 15 years, but her current job doesn't have a pension plan. She's depending on Social Security to be a major part of her retirement.

We're also joined by Molly Lozoff from Miami Beach. Molly is a retired real estate broker and a 77-year-old widow who receives a Social Security check each month. When she was 35, her husband had an incapacitating stroke which left him unable to

speaking for the rest of his life. She became his legal guardian and in the process of getting her own life together, she discovered that there were programs that provide assistance for the minor children of disabled parents -- government programs. She believes that the assistance that she received back then enabled her children to become the successful adults that they are today.

Also with us today is Wilma Haga from my home state of Tennessee. She's from Bristol, the birthplace of country music -- where the Carter family made their first recording, Mr. President. (Laughter.) And Wilma is a 76-year-old retired cafeteria worker with a small pension. Eight years ago her husband died, and she receives his Social Security check each month. Wilma says that she could not survive without Social Security and would do anything to help people understand how important it is to women like her. And there are lots of them.

We're also joined by Lucy Sanchez from right here in Washington, D.C. And over the course of 8 months her husband had heart surgery twice. To care for her husband, Lucy was able to use our Family and Medical Leave law. Today Mrs. Sanchez says, "If I had to go to work I would have been useless. Family and Medical Leave allowed me to do what I had to do because, no matter what, family comes first." And you're going to see how that ties in to this event here today in just a minute.

Now, finally, we are joined by Tyra Brown, a 20-year-old psychology major at Howard University, originally from Oklahoma City. Tyra is an honor student, a Ronald McNair scholar, and an AmeriCorps member. Her mother passed away when Tyra was only 15 years old. Thanks to Social Security, Tyra was able to receive Social Security survivors' benefits until the age of 18.

The message of these stories is clear: Strengthening Social Security is not just a fiscal responsibility, it is a profoundly moral responsibility. It is about preserving our oldest and most cherished values.

Nobody understands that better than President Bill Clinton. For decades now, few elected officials have been willing to take on this important challenge. Everybody here has heard Social Security referred to as the third rail -- people were afraid to touch it. Well, President Clinton believes that it's so important to America's future we can't afford not to take it on. And actually, if you study these numbers and statistics, you come away immediately with the conclusion the sooner the better, because the sooner we do take it on, the easier it will be to fix it in the right way.

His leadership is making an enormous difference for our seniors and for all generations. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great pleasure and honor to present our President, Bill Clinton. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the White House. I want to thank the Vice President, the members of the administration, Congressman

Cardin, all the panelists who are here, the satellite audience at the 12 other sites across our country. I'd like to say a special word of appreciation and welcome to Betty Freidan, who has written with such insight and appreciation for the challenges women face as they grow older.

We're here to talk about the special impact of the challenge to Social Security on the women of the United States. I would like to put it in, if I might, a larger context. Six years ago, when the Vice President and I came here, we brought a new vision of government against a backdrop of a \$290 billion deficit and the kind of problem we're here to talk about today that we knew was looming in the future. We believed that we could give the American people a government that would live within its means, but at the same time invest in and empower our people.

It led to an array of new policies in education and the economy, the budget, the environment, in health care, in crime, welfare reform. Indeed, it led to the very effort to reinvent government, to use the Vice President's phrase, and the great effort that he made in that regard. But over the last six years we have been more active, among other things, in family matters and health matters, and a whole range of domestic areas, while giving the American people the smallest federal establishment since President Kennedy was here.

And the results, I think, have been quite good for our people, in terms of prosperity, opportunity is abundant, communities are stronger, families are more secure. This year, all year long, I have told the American people and done my best to persuade the Congress that it is terribly important to build on this prosperity and its newfound confidence to meet the remaining challenges this country faces on the edge of a new century -- particularly, and perhaps most important, the need to save Social Security and to prepare for the retirement of the baby boomers.

On December 8th and 9th we will hold the first ever White House Conference on Social Security, with a goal of paving the way toward a truly bipartisan national solution early next year. Social Security, as many of you know from your own experience, and as all our panelists will be able to discuss in one way or the other, is more than a monthly check or an ID number. It represents a sacred trust among the generations. It represents a trust not only between grandparents, parents and children, those in retirement and those that work, but also the able-bodied and those who are disabled. It is our obligation to one another and it reflects our deepest values as Americans. And it must maintain a rock-solid guarantee.

We have a great opportunity to save Social Security. As all of you know, just this month we closed the books on our first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years. It is the product of hardworking Americans who drive the most powerful economic engine our country has had in a generation; the product of hard choices by lawmakers who put our nation's long-term economic interest very often above their own short-term political interest. It is an achievement that all Americans can be proud of.

But we have to ask ourselves to what end has this been done. Of course, balancing the budget is essential for our own prosperity in this time of intense global competition. But it also gives us a chance to do something meaningful for future generations by strengthening Social Security. And doing that will help to keep our economy sound and help to keep our budget balanced, as we honor our duty to our parents and our children.

As the Vice President said, soon there will be many more older Americans. I hope that he and I will be among them. (Laughter.) Two of the 75 million baby boomers who will be retiring over the next 30 years. By the year 2013, what Social Security takes in will no longer be enough to fund what it pays out. And then we'll have to dip into the trust fund as provided by law. But by 2032, as this chart on the left makes clear, the trust fund itself will be empty and the money Social Security takes in will soon be only enough to pay 72 percent of benefits.

Now, that's the big reason I wanted to reserve the surplus until we decide what to do about Social Security. Every American must have retirement security in the sunset years. We plan for it, count on it, should be able to rely on it. That holds true for women, as well as men. But in the case of women, Social Security is especially important. On average, women live longer than men; women make up 60 percent of all elderly recipients of Social Security -- 72 recipients over the age of 85, as you can see here.

For elderly women, Social Security makes up more than half their income. And for many it is literally all that stands between them and the ravages of poverty. You can see what the poverty rate is for elderly women -- it's 13.1 percent with Social Security; without it, it would be over 50 percent. Study after study shows us that women face greater economic challenges in retirement than men do, for three reasons.

First, women live longer. A woman 65 years of age has a life expectancy of 85 years. A man 65 years of age has a life expectancy of 81 years. Second, for comparable hours of work, women still have lower lifetime earnings than men, although we're working on that. Third, women reach retirement with smaller pensions and other assets than men do.

Now, Social Security has a number of features to help women meet these challenges. And we have done a lot of work over the last six years to try to help make it easier for people to take out their own pensions and to make it more attractive for small businesses to help to provide pensions for their employees, which could have a disproportionate impact, positive impact for women in the years ahead. But the hard fact remains that too many retired women, after providing for their families, are having trouble providing for themselves.

Now, we have worked these last six years to expand pension coverage, to make the pensions more secure, to simplify the management of pension plans. We've worked for

the economic empowerment of women, to end wage discrimination and strengthen enforcement of the Equal Pay Act. But we must do more until women earn \$1 for every \$1 men earn for the same work; and today we're only three-quarters of the way there. We must work harder to give retired women the security they deserve that they could not get for themselves in the years they were working.

Today, I am announcing two concrete steps we must take. First, I propose that workers who take time off under the Family and Medical Leave Act should be able to count that time toward retirement plan vesting and eligibility requirements. Sometimes the few months spent at home with a child mean the difference between pension benefits and no pension benefits. That is precisely the wrong message to send to people who are trying to balance work and family.

Millions and millions of people have now taken advantage of the Family Leave Act when a family member was desperately ill or a baby was born. None of them should have lost time for retirement vesting and eligibility benefits.

Second, I am proposing that families be given the choice to receive less of their pension when both spouses are living, leaving more for the surviving spouse if the breadwinner dies. That should help keep elderly widows out of poverty in their twilight years. And the poverty rate for single women, for elderly widows is much higher -- almost -- about 40 percent higher than that 13 percent figure there.

These proposals build on the work of Congressman David Price of North Carolina and Senator Barbara Boxer and Senator Carol Moseley-Braun. They will make a difference for our mothers, our wives, our sisters and some day for our daughters. But let me emphasize again the most important thing we can do for future generations is to strengthen Social Security overall.

When I said in my State of the Union address I would reject any attempt to spend any surplus until we save Social Security, I knew the congressional majority wanted to drain brilliance from the surplus even before it appeared on the books, much less having the ink dry. And not just this year, but permanently. Now, I am not opposed to tax cuts, and my balanced budget we have tax cuts for education, for child care, for the environment, and for making it easier for people to get pensions. I'm just opposed to using the surplus to fund tax cuts until we have used all we need of it to save the Social Security system for the 21st century.

The threat of a veto put a stop to that effort in this last Congress. The next Congress will be the Congress I call upon actually to move to save Social Security for the 21st century. It should not be a partisan issue, and we should not have another partisan fight to save the surplus until we reform Social Security.

But recently, Republican leaders are still saying the surplus should go to fund tax cuts first, and the Senate Majority Leader has suggested that he may not even be willing to

work with me to save Social Security. Well, I hope that's just election season rhetoric. After all, they were willing to work with the insurance lobbyists to kill the patients' bill of rights. (Laughter.) And then they worked with the tobacco companies to kill our teen smoking bill to protect our children from the dangers of tobacco. And they were happy to work with the special interest who were determined to kill campaign finance reform. I think the Senate Majority Leader will be able to find time to work with me to save Social Security. (Applause.) And I certainly hope so.

I say this partly with a smile on my face, but in dead seriousness. This issue will not have the kind of money behind it that the tobacco interests can marshal or the health insurance companies can marshal against the patients' bill of rights. And everybody here with an opinion is going to have to give up a little of it if we're going to make the right kind of decision to get there. This is the sort of decision that requires us to open our minds, open our eyes, open our ears, open our hearts, think about what America will be like 30 years from now, not just what it's like today, and imagine what it will be like when those of us who aren't retired will be retired and our children will be raising our grandchildren -- increasingly, when those of us who are retired will be looking after our great-grandchildren as the life expectancy goes up and up.

This requires imagination. And it will be hard enough under the best of circumstances. It would be foolish to take this projected structural surplus that has been built in for six hard years of effort and squander it, until we know what it will cost to have a system that all Americans, without regard to party, can be proud of.

Now, this is an issue that offers us that kind of choice between progress and partisanship; moving forward, turning back; putting people over politics. In 11 days we will elect a Congress that will determine the future of Social Security. We need one that is 100 percent committed to saving Social Security first; to putting the long-term security of the American people -- our parents and our children -- ahead of the short-term politics.

Now let me say I am eager to hear from our panelists. I think it's important to note on this day with this subject that one of America's first great advocates for Social Security was the Secretary of Labor, Frances Perkins. As Secretary Herman would tell you, Frances Perkins' name now graces the Department of Labor building, just down Pennsylvania Avenue. She was the first woman to hold that office, or any other Cabinet office. Years later, on the 25th anniversary of Social Security, Frances Perkins looked ahead and said this, "We will go forward into the future a stronger nation because of the fact that we have this basic rock of security under all our people."

That foundation, that rock, was laid by Frances Perkins and Franklin Roosevelt. It is up to all of together, women and men, to make sure that rock will hold up all our people in the 21st century. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Molly, why don't you go first? Tell us your story and your family's experience with

Social Security.

MS. LOZOFF: Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, Mr. Vice President and my fellow Americans, the month was October and the year was 1955. I was a happy 33-year-old mother of four wonderful children. I was a stay-at-home mother. My husband was a successful realtor until that fateful day, when he suffered a severe stroke that left him paralyzed and unable to express himself for the remaining 14 years of his life.

After the initial shock, I realized that I had to get busy and prepare myself for a career in order to be able to provide for my children and my disabled husband. It took about a year for me to become his legal guardian, handle his finances and earn my real estate license. During that time I learned of this new Social Security program, which started in 1956 -- fortunately for me -- that offered disability insurance for minor children of a disabled provider.

It was such a relief to know that my government was going to help me survive this crisis. I believe to this day that this assistance enabled my children to confront this severe family problem and allowed them to become the fine, successful, caring human beings they are today. Without this assistance I could not have fared as well. It gave me the solid base that I needed to build my family's future.

Many years have passed, and at this time in my life I find that I am once again turning to my government for help through the Social Security program. The amount that I receive every month enables me to provide for my basic living expenses. I know quite a few of my contemporaries in Florida who could not go on without their Social Security benefits. For some it's literally life-sustaining.

I'm so proud we have a President who feels a tug on his heart for our plight, the plight of the elderly. We should strongly support his efforts to use some of the budget surplus to ensure that the Social Security system will survive and continue to help those in need, well into the next millennium.

Thank you, Mr. President, we're so proud of you. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: I'd just like to say -- I think I speak for everyone in this room, I guess some bad things happen to everybody in life and a lot of us were probably feeling nonetheless that we can't imagine how we would have dealt with what you have obviously dealt with so magnificently. And if Social Security helped, then I think we can all be grateful that it did. We thank you very much.

MS. LOZOFF: There are many people in my place, I know, today.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Mr. President, I refer to Tyra Brown's story earlier. A lot of

people commonly think of Social Security as a retirement program. And they don't stop to think that out of the 44 million Americans that receive Social Security, one-third of them are either survivors or disabled Americans. And a lot of them, some 3.8 million beneficiaries, are children; and almost 2 million of them are survivors of deceased parents.

Tyra, could you tell us your story, which represents a story that millions of others -- similar to that of millions of other children.

MS. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. President, thank you, Mr. Vice President, for inviting me here today. It's good to know that you both are working hard and using your leadership to help strengthen Social Security.

My name is Tyra Brown, and I'm from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. I'm currently a junior here at Howard University, a historically black university, in Washington, D.C. While in school I'm working with AmeriCorps as a jump-start member, and I work in a Head Start center tutoring preschool children who are struggling with literacy skills and social development. I'm working toward the day when every child will enter prepared to succeed. After I earn my Bachelor's Degree at Howard I plan to go on to graduate school and become a child psychologist.

I enjoy working with children who need a helping hand, and I believe that as an American family, we all need to do what we can to help each other out. That is why I think Social Security is so important. It was there for me and I want it to be there in the future.

Most people think of Social Security as a retirement program, and it is. But what a lot of people don't know is that the Social Security system also helps out millions of people like myself who are not retired. When I was 15, I had a terrible experience -- I lost my mother to heart failure. And she worked very hard for me all of her life to provide for me, and after she passed my grandmother became my legal guardian. And we received Social Security survivors' benefits to help us with some of the expenses.

It wasn't easy, but the Social Security really helped, and we could count on that income to be there every month. And I don't think we could have made it otherwise without it. When my mom was alive she paid into the Social Security system, and although she wasn't able to get her retirement benefits, her Social Security contributions did help provide for me when I needed support. And I'm not alone. There are millions of other survivors out there who count on Social Security every month.

Now as I'm beginning to think about my own future, I think about that guarantee. As I pay into Social Security I want to be sure that it will be there for my retirement or in case of any other tragic circumstances, guaranteed. I know that Social Security needs to be strengthened and I know that there has to be a way to do it to preserve that vital guarantee.

That's why, Mr. President, I was very glad to hear your State of the Union address. We need to save Social Security first. It touches millions of lives in America. It has touched mine, and I hope it will be strong for generations to come.

Thank you. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: We have heard from a student and a retiree. Now I'd like to call on someone who is working and planning for retirement. And I'd like to mention something that I mentioned in my opening remarks, to which the Vice President also referred, and that is that 60 percent of women workers, both part- and full-time, work at jobs that do not provide a pension. And as I said, we have worked very hard on this for the last six years and we've tried to come up with all kinds of proposals that would facilitate more employers providing pensions. And we will do more on that.

But meanwhile, we are where we are. Most Americans, even on Social Security, have some other source of income. But as you see from the chart, over half the women in this country who are retired would be in poverty but for Social Security.

So I'd like for Bernice Myer to talk a little bit about the challenges that she's facing and how she's trying to deal with the prospect of retirement in the job that she's in.

Bernice.

MS. MYER: Thank you, Mr. President and Mr. Vice President. I'm Bernice Myer. I'm a home care aide in Seattle, Washington. I'm 49 years old and have been working in service professions all of my life, all low paid. I feel that my work is very valuable to the people I serve and to society as a whole. I enjoy my work and have appreciated the opportunities I've had in each position.

One of my concerns as I grow older is where will -- a little anxiety as to whether or not I will have money available for my living. I have no pension plan currently and live basically paycheck to paycheck. So I'm very dependent upon what will happen. I'm a member of the Office and Professional Employees Union and am working to increase wages for home care aides. And we see some progress, but it's slow and I doubt that the progress I would like to see will happen in my lifetime. I think this important work and I hope that eventually pay received will match the value of the work.

I want to thank the President and the Vice President for this table conference, lifting up Social Security benefits. I'm depending on them being there when I retire. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: One of the questions that we'll be asked to deal with, that most younger people who are interested in this will ask us to deal with, is the question of how much flexibility individual citizens should be given, and should there be alternative investment strategies for the Social Security fund. There will be a lot of these questions asked by young people, particularly.

And I think it is important to keep in mind that there is always a balance between greater flexibility with the prospects of greater return on the trust fund and rock solid certainty. And, ironically, to people in Bernice's position, she'd actually be better off with both, because if you don't have a pension you need a higher income out of Social Security, but if you don't have a pension you have very little room for risk.

And there are -- if you think about it, our society for decades, by and large, made a bargain with our critical service workers -- the people that pick up our trash every day, or the police that patrol our streets, or the teachers that teach our children -- we say, okay, we'll get you the best pay we can, but even though you'll never get rich, at least you'll have a pension as well as Social Security.

Now there's been an explosion, in the last 10 years especially, in America, of trying to provide more direct services to people in-home. And most everybody believes that's a good thing -- it promotes more independence, a greater sense of security of the people receiving the services. But there are huge numbers of Americans, like Bernice, out there who are performing critical services and taking our country in a direction most people who have studied this believe we need to do more of.

And one day eventually they'll all be covered by some kind of an organizational system that will give them a decent retirement plan. But, meanwhile, you've got people like Bernice that are out there doing things that we should have been doing as a society long before, that are making this a better place, that don't yet either have the bargaining power, the political support or whatever necessary to have the pensions that they need -- either that or the economics of reimbursing for the service are not sufficient to support a pension. It is wrong to let people like her do all this work for us and not at least be able to rely on an adequate Social Security system in retirement.

This is not an isolated story. This is a person who represents a growing number of Americans, not a shrinking number of Americans, doing something that most experts believe is making us a better society.

I didn't want to take so much time, but I just think it's very important that you understand we picked these people -- they're very compelling, I think, all of the panelists; but they're also representative, not isolated cases. And I think it's important to think about this when we make these plans for the future. (Applause.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: And, Mr. President, women are more likely to be in that kind of situation. And I know you've been saying this for a long time, and Ben Cardin has been saying it for a long time, and others -- but I remember not too long back when I had the privilege of going to one of the forums on Social Security, this one at Rhode Island. Carolyn Lukensmeyer (phonetic) and her colleagues were hosting these events all over the country -- I think you went to two or three of them.

And before that event, the women members of the caucus in the House and Senate all

wrote a letter the me saying, we see you're going up there to Rhode Island, here's some facts we want you to keep in mind. I knew a lot of them, but I must say, they brought out some facts that really deserve a lot more attention. Of course, all of them are on the table here today. But they have to do with the fact that women do live longer and pay in less for a lot of historical and life reasons.

Anyway, Wilma Haga here is representative of some people that we have with us today who can sort of tell us about what it would be like without it. I believe I mentioned she's from Bristol, Tennessee -- (laughter.)

MS. HAGA: You did.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Wilma is 76 and her husband died eight years ago. And Social Security has made a great big difference. In our part of the country, Wilma, and all over the country, really, it used to be that older widows were very likely to be extremely poor. Many counties used to have what they called poorhouses -- before my time, but I've surely heard about them. And without Social Security they've estimated that more than 60 percent of all older widows would be living in poverty.

Now, in your life you have not had to face those circumstances mainly because of Social Security. Tell us about that.

MS. HAGA: Okay. Mr. President, Mr. Vice President, I'm so happy to be here, and thank you for inviting me. I just feel real honored and excited to be with you all today.

I am 76 years old and my husband, Alvin, and me had two sons -- Mike and Thomas. Al and I both had a high school education, but we weren't able to go to college. But we were absolutely determined that our two boys would go to college. For 28 years I worked in the school cafeteria, and every week I'd put my paycheck in the bank to take care of those boys' education. So my husband was an electrician, but he also worked three or four other jobs so that we could save all the money that we could for them.

I'm pleased that both of my sons did get a college education. Mike, in fact, is a seminary graduate. He works for you, Mr. President. (Laughter.) He works as an appointee at the Department of Agriculture and I'm so proud of him. And Thomas, my oldest son, has a very successful business in Texas, investment business. I'm proud of both of them.

As a widow on a modest income, I am keenly aware of the importance of Social Security. When I retired, after almost 28 years, I received a pension of only \$200 a month from the school system. My monthly Social Security benefit totaled all of \$300. Fortunately, my husband was still alive, and so I was not completely dependent on that \$500 for all my income. I don't know how I would have survived with that money alone.

My husband died in 1991, Mr. President and Mr. Vice President. When that happened, my Social Security benefit was replaced by his. I got a raise of nearly \$600 a month at a time that I really needed it. Now, between my monthly Social Security check of \$915 and my pension, I can live very well. In fact, I'm proud that I can live independently and productively without any assistance from either one of my sons. There are millions of widows all over America just like me -- women who didn't earn all that much. But we now have the blessing of knowing that our years of hard work paid off, both in the success of our children and in having our government guarantee that we will have a secure old age. I owe it to my sons and my grandchildren to make sure that they have this same kind of security.

Again, Mr. President and Mr. Vice President, thank you so much for inviting me here today. Most importantly, thank you for providing the leadership needed and for making the future of Social Security a top priority. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: We asked Lucy Sanchez to come here to talk about the Family and Medical Leave Act and its effect on her life, because I think it's important to point out that while both men and women are equally eligible for the Family and Medical Leave Act, women are far more likely to take advantage of it -- and they should not lose a year of eligibility, in terms of retirement vesting, when they do.

Keep in mind, if men and women all had retirement systems in addition to Social Security, and they were more or less equal, then our task of dealing with handling the baby boomers in the retirement system would be much, much easier. And so anything we can do now to equalize the impact of retirement earnings among similarly situated people 20 years from now will change and make less difficult the changes we are going to have to make anyway in the Social Security system.

I think it's very important for everybody to kind of keep that in mind. So when I announced earlier today, a few moments ago, that we wanted people not to lose credit in retirement vesting when they access the Family and Medical Leave Act. I think it's important -- we have an illustration of why it's important to have this law on the books and why it is inconsistent with being pro-work or pro-family to disallow retirement vesting just because people are taking advantage of the law.

Lucy?

MS. SANCHEZ: Thank you, Mr. President and Mr. Vice President, for inviting me to be here today. My experience is very recent. My husband went to walk the dogs one morning a year ago. Halfway home he suffered a dissection of his aorta -- that's a tear. He managed to make it home and climbed our front steps and opened the door. He collapsed against the door jam and called my name. Luckily, I was home.

He has a genetic condition called Marfan's Syndrome, which affects the body's connective tissue. The most serious problems associated with Marfan's Syndrome

involve the cardiovascular system, and the aorta, which is the main artery carrying blood away from the heart, is wider and more fragile than normal.

So instead of driving to work together that morning we drove to the emergency room at the Washington Hospital Center here. We had the advantage of being pretty certain we knew what had happened, and we told the ER staff, and he was in surgery within an hour.

Meanwhile, I phoned his office and explained, and I phoned my office and explained. I didn't go back to work for 90 days. He actually had two surgeries that time and was in the intensive care unit for 11 days and in the hospital for three weeks. He came home sick, weak, confused, frightened, disoriented, unsteady. He didn't know when he was hungry. He didn't know when he needed to sleep. He didn't know what pills to take. So I could be there to take care of him. He recovered sufficiently to return to work in February.

Then it happened again in May. Both times he needed around-the-clock care from me. They say trouble comes in threes so in July, my 85-year-old mother landed in the hospital with major health problems. And I was able to fly to Kentucky to be with her, to bring her home, and to make more permanent arrangements.

All of this was in the last 12 months, and who else is there to care for your family but you. Because that's why we have families, that's why we're part of families. We care for each other. And it is because of the Family and Medical Leave Act that I could care for my mother and my husband three different times this year.

I was out of work for 90 days, but I was not out of a job. I knew my job would be there without having to ask my boss for special favors. I'm sure she would have given them, but I didn't have to resort to that. I knew my seniority wouldn't be affected, and the fact that there was a plan in place to take care of life's exigencies -- and life is nothing but unexpected -- was a great relief. When your life is in turmoil it is just enormously comforting to know that that is there.

I did wonder what would happen to employee pension plans that I participate in -- would they continue, would they be affected, would they -- when I was actually lucky enough to be on annual leave and sick leave, for most of the time my paycheck continued. But should I have had to take even more time, I didn't know whether that would negate the plan or interrupt it. I just didn't know what would have happened if I hadn't been vested.

I believe that the Family Medical Leave Act is one of the finest pieces of legislation, a real contribution to the well-being of the American family and especially women, because women are the care-givers, as we all know.

We don't anticipate personal disasters. We tend to think of all of us as invincible,

especially our own families. But it isn't always that way. This act is important to anyone, but especially women. I don't believe that people who take family medical leave should suffer pension loss, so I'm very happy to hear of this new plan.

Women usually put their needs after everyone else's. They tell us not to, but we do it anyway. And pension loss would put women who don't have much saved for the future at an even greater disadvantage.

I want to thank you, Mr. President and Mr. Vice President, for your leadership in the enactment of Family Medical Leave. I'm fortunate enough to work for an employer, the National Association of Social Workers, who strongly advocated for the Family and Medical Leave Act. And as we all know, professional social workers routinely help people juggle family care and work issues. And may I also just add as an amendment that Frances Perkins was a social worker. (Laughter.)

Eventually, the pieces of my life came back together. Everyone is well. And I would hope that no one would ever have to use Family and Medical Leave Act as I did, but regrettably, I know better. Thank you. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, thank you for sharing your story with us. We can all see how recent it has been and how difficult it has been for you, and you were very brave to come here and talk with us today. And we thank you for that very much.

We believe -- the Vice President and I and our spouses -- that the Family Leave law ought to be expanded some. (Applause.) We've tried in two Congresses to do that and haven't gotten very far. But we'll keep plugging away at it, because I think unless people have been in this situation where they're afraid they're going to lose their job, or wreck their retirement because they're just doing what's necessary to hold their families together, they can't imagine it. And the law is actually a great -- it's actually good for businesses, too, because it doesn't put any employers at a competitive disadvantage if it applies to all employers equally. It tends to minimize the cost, the burden of risk, for that. And I thank you very much for what you said.

But I think if we can take this whole family leave issue out of the whole -- just eliminate it in terms of whether your retirement vests or not, I think it would be a good thing to do. Modest cost to the retirement systems, enormous benefit to the stability of families. So I thank you very, very much for that.

Well, I think our panelists have done a great job, and I want to thank them for that. (Applause.) Again, what we attempted to do today was to show that on the present facts that women have a disproportionate interest the stability of the Social Security system and in the adequacy of the benefit because they are disproportionately likely to need it and more likely to have other assets -- or less likely to have other assets.

We also wanted to emphasize the disability and child survivor benefits, which our

panelists have so eloquently done. None of this, however, is an excuse to avoid making the hard decisions we have to make because of the demographic changes that are occurring. It is just that we have to be mindful of it.

And what I'm hoping we did today was not to confuse anyone, that we've still got hard decisions to make, but to say that we ought to be especially sensitive to how these decisions affect women -- number one. And number two, we ought to be steely in our determination not to let the surplus go until we figure how much cost is involved and how we're going to balance all the difficult choices that have to be made and the risks that will have to be taken because we've got to maintain the social cohesion that Social Security has given us.

Think about what we got out of Molly being able to live her life under the circumstances and raise her children. Think about what society got out of that. Think about what society is going to get out of Tyra Brown because she was not abandoned when her mother suddenly passed away at the age of 15. And we were all sitting there watching her talk, just feeling better being Americans, weren't we, every one of us. Don't you think it was worth it to take care of her -- help her grandmother take care of her for three years? We all got something out of that, and she's got 60 years or more of giving back to society, that we're all going to benefit from that.

**THE WHITE HOUSE**  
**Office of the Press Secretary**

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For Immediate Release

June 10, 1998

**REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
ON THE EQUAL PAY ACT**

Room 450  
Old Executive Office Building

3:29 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. We gather here to recognize and reaffirm the historic commitment of this nation to equal opportunity.

Before I get into my remarks, I hope you will understand if I don't let the moment pass without making a brief comment about the shocking and outrageous murder of James Byrd, Jr., in Jasper, Texas. Federal law enforcement officials are on the ground there, assisting local law enforcement officials. Because it's an ongoing investigation can't comment on the facts of the case, but I can tell you this. We are determined that the investigation will be thorough, will be fair, and that the guilty will be brought to justice.

I ask for your thoughts and your prayers to be with the family of Mr. Byrd today, and with the people of that community, because in the face of this tragedy, they must join together across racial lines to demonstrate that an act of evil like this is not what this country is all about. I think we've all been touched by it. I can only imagine that virtually everyone who lives there is in agony at this moment. But they must reaffirm -- and so must we -- that we will not tolerate this.

Now, let me just say, I've had a wonderful time here today, and everything that needs to be said has been said. (Laughter.) I thank Hillary and Al and Tipper. We care a lot about these issues. We spent hours in 1992 -- hours -- talking about how we had to change the framework of American life so that people could succeed at work and at home; how we had to make it possible for everyone who was able-bodied to work, but how the most important work of any society was taking good care of our children. And we went through this whole long litany of things -- of which unequal pay is clearly a big one -- that are barriers to building strong families, strong communities, and the strongest possible economy.

I thank Senator Kennedy, Senator Boxer, and Congresswoman DeLauro, and Delegate Norton, and all the members of the House who are here -- and my special friend, Dorothy Height, for a lifetime of commitment to all this.

I'm here because, like Rosa DeLauro, I'm the son of a working mother, I had a working grandmother, I have a hard working wife, and we have done everything we could to make sure that our daughter never faced any barriers to her dreams. That's what I want for every American young person.

Although, I must say -- you remember when Senator Kennedy said that he talked about how much we'd closed the inequality gap in the last three or four years and if that pace of progress had been kept for the last 35 years, then women would be earning \$1.71 for every dollar of men. And that's about the ratio of my earnings and Hillary's before I became President. (Laughter and applause.) And I liked it quite well. (Laughter.) First thing you

know, the people that don't agree with us on anything will be accusing me of some strategy to make men lazy. (Laughter.)

We have indeed come a long way since Dorothy Height and Congresswoman Edna Kelly and others were here 35 years ago. President Kennedy said that the Equal Pay Act was basic to democracy, giving women the same rights in the workplace they have enjoyed at the polling place. You've already heard that we have moved in that 35 years from a period when, on average, women earned 58 cents for every dollar men earned, to a report released by the Council of Economic Advisors -- and Dr. Yellen is here -- saying that women now earn more than 75 cents on the dollar. But that's just three-quarters of the way home.

And to people who think it isn't very much, I ask you if you had the choice, would you rather have 100 cents on the dollar or 75, you would think it was quite a lot after you had taken a few of those 75-cent dollars.

Here's something that's interesting that no one else has pointed out. The CEA study shows that the gender gap is persistent, though narrowing, despite women's gains in education and experience, and even accounting for the difficulties of balancing family and work so that there are more women in part time jobs. When you take account of every conceivable variable explainable by something other than plain old discrimination in equal pay for equal work, there is still this 25 percent gap.

And the Labor Department today -- and I thank Deputy Secretary Higgins for being here -- is releasing a report which shows a history of women's employment. It shows what the obstacles were, which ones have faded away, which ones still remain. To those of you who have been involved in this for a long time, I urge you to look at the Council of Economic Advisors report and the Labor Department report, and I think you will be persuaded that there is no explanation for the gap that is complete without acknowledging the continued existence of discrimination.

Now, this should not be a partisan political issue. In a funny way, it shouldn't even be a gender issue. More fundamentally, it is a civil rights issue; more fundamentally than that, it is a family issue -- or I can testify that young boys eat at the table where the bread is earned by their mothers as well. And it is a matter of American principle. It's a question of what kind of America we want our children and our grandchildren to live in in the 21st century.

That's why I strongly support the Equal Pay Act that Senator Daschle and Congresswoman DeLauro introduced. Wage discrimination based on gender is just as wrong as wage discrimination based on race or any other artificial category.

This legislation will help us to close the last part of the gap. It will strengthen enforcement of the Equal Pay Act. It will toughen penalties for violations. And it will boost compensation for working women. It is tough, it is fair. Congress should pass it. And I join Congresswoman DeLauro in asking that it be scheduled for a vote. Let's give everybody in Congress the chance to vote on something good and the chance to do something good for the people back home. (Applause.)

We're coming up on the first anniversary of the President's Initiative on Race, so I've been thinking a lot about what it means to have a society with equal opportunity, where people are bound together celebrating their differences, but understanding there are things we have in common that are more fundamental.

There have been a lot of people who have written some interesting books and some that I didn't quite agree with over the last several years, talking about the inherent differences between men and women -- Venus, Mars, Uranus, Pluto, whatever -- (laughter) -- and others on a more -- with a more political overtone. But I believe that whatever your views on that are, surely all of us believe that the citizenship we share is unitary, and that the guarantees of the Constitution are sweeping enough to embrace us all without regard to our gender.

Therefore, it is ludicrous to say that 75 percent equality is enough.

You wouldn't tolerate getting to vote in three out of every four elections. (Laughter.) You wouldn't like it if someone said you could only pick up three out of every four paychecks. But that is, in effect, what we have said to the women of America. Show up every month, show up every day -- show up every day -- but only three out of four paydays. It's not good enough.

The 21st century, as I have been pounding the podium about for the last five and a half years, will be the time of greatest opportunity in all human history, especially for our country. We cannot let it be known also for the opportunities that were lost and the people who were left behind. With your help, we will prevail.

Thank you and God bless you. (Applause.)

**Statistics on Equal Pay:**

Female Labor Force Participation Rate by State, 1977 and 1997  
Gender Pay Gap by State, 1997



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**THE WHITE HOUSE**  
**Office of the Press Secretary**

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For Immediate Release

April 23, 1998

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
ON CHILD CARE

The Rose Garden

10:20 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, Hillary and I are delighted to have all of you here. We thank Mr. Tobias for his work and the power of his example. I thank Secretary Shalala and Secretary Herman for their extraordinary work, and Secretary Rubin, in his absence. And I note the presence here by SBA Director Aida Alvarez, and our OMB Director, Frank Raines, in the back. I thank the members of Congress who are here -- Representatives Lois Capps, Rosa DeLauro, Sheila Jackson Lee, Sandy Levin, Patsy Mink, Tim Romer, Ellen Tauscher, Lynn Woolsey, and Steny Hoyer.

There are many other members of Congress who are supporting this child care initiative --two who are not here, three that I think I should mention are Senators Dodd, Jeffords, and Kohl, along with Senator Specter who have given real bipartisan leadership to the child care initiative in the Senate.

Let me also say I'm delighted to see all the children here today. I like Take Our Daughters To Work Day. As Representative Capps pointed out, since her daughter works in the White House, she came to work with her daughter today instead of the other way around. (Laughter.) But, for the rest of you, I like this day.

When my daughter started pre-school, and she was asked what her father did, she said that he works at McDonald's. (Laughter.) So I decided I better take her to work with me, even though I realized it would result in a diminution of my status in her eyes. (Laughter.) So then, by the time she went to kindergarten, she had actually been to work with me, and they asked her what I did for a living and she said, "Well, he drinks coffee, makes speeches and talks on the telephone." (Laughter.) (Laughter.) So I'm delighted that all the children are here.

The idea of merging work and family is embodied in Take Our Daughters To Work Day. There's also another important idea embodied in it, which is that we want our daughters to believe, along with our sons, that they can aspire to do whatever it is they want to do, whatever they're willing to do, whatever they're prepared to make the effort to do. Now, if you want that to be a reality, we have to make a commitment to give all of our children the best possible childhoods. That's really what all this is about.

Last year Hillary and I sponsored two conferences that many of our administration people helped on and many of you participated -- one on child care and the other one on early childhood and the brain. Now, what they showed is what all of you already know, but what is still not widely accepted by decision-makers in our society. They showed, first of all, that

the early years are profoundly important and that an even greater percentage of a child's learning capacity and intellectual infrastructure is built up in those very early years. And they showed what we in the child care conference, what we've all been here to say today, that people are worried about whether they can find child care, whether they can afford it, and whether it will be good child care.

We've been very fortunate in our country in the last few years, and I know we're all grateful to have the best economy in a generation and the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years and the lowest crime rates in a generation. But if we really want Americans to succeed over the long run we have to allow every family the opportunity to succeed at home and at work. It is the most fundamental decision we have to make. There is no more important job in a society than raising children well. Nothing even compares with it. In the end, if you fail at that job, all the other jobs will, by definition, fail.

Therefore, there is virtually nothing worse you can do to a parent than to put a parent in the position of basically just being knotted up every day, worrying about whether he or she has fulfilled the responsibilities to the child. How can you be at work worrying about your kids, and if you have to leave work to take care of your kids, except in emergency situations or for appropriate events -- there's a sacrifice there.

One of the reasons the business community is interested in this is that enlightened business leaders understand that, actually, if you permit people to do the right thing by their children you wind up having a happier, more upbeat, more affirmative, more positive business environment, and ultimately the business enterprise will be more successful because the workers are also successful at home. That's what this whole business is about, taking care of their children and not asking their parents to choose between being good parents and good workers. It all comes down to that.

The private sector obviously can and should do more. We should have more companies that are willing to follow the example of these fine leaders who are here and who have been acknowledged. The Treasury working group that Secretary Rubin has led has done a very important job in participating in and presenting this report to me, and I am glad to receive it.

I'm also releasing a report today that Secretary Herman has provided that highlights other family-friendly businesses, giving them sort of an honor roll status. I think it's well-deserved, and I hope that the work the Labor Department will now do in serving as a clearinghouse for companies interested in child care and setting up mentoring programs between businesses on child care will get more and more private sector folks involved. Secretary Shalala pointed out that in the welfare reform bill -- the one we finally got -- we fought like crazy to get \$4 billion in child care for states. But, believe it or not, there's still a lot of demand out there that's not being met, in state after state after state.

Hillary said before we came out of the Oval Office this morning that everybody talks about how important child care is, but if you look at higher education -- and this may be hard for some of you to believe if you have staggering tuition bills, but still, nationwide, families directly pay only about 25 percent of the costs of their children's move through college.

No one questions that we have the best system of higher education in the world. No one questions that it's not only been good to let our children live out their dreams, but it's also been very, very good for the American economy. By contrast, with child care, the average family, at an earlier age with a lower income, just getting started out in the work force with young children, on the whole, pays over 60 percent of a cost out of pocket.

So I would suggest to you that we basically have a choice to make here. I have put a proposal before Congress that deals with affordability, accessibility, the training of the workers, the quality of the child care. But the fundamental question is not so much over the specifics of our proposal, but whether the national government has a responsibility to do more. And we have a fundamental choice: Do you believe that the early years are as

important as all the evidence says? Do you believe that we could hardly do anything better for America's families than to relieve them of the burden of being terribly worried about their children while they're at work? In other words, do you believe that this should be an urgent priority for America?

That is the decision every member of Congress should make. And this year, we shouldn't slide by it. Everybody should just stand up and say, yes, or no -- because the budget is going to be in balance, we have the money to make a major step forward. (Applause.)

Now, there's a highway bill making its way through Congress, and I support a good highway bill. I presented a good highway bill that would have significant increase in our infrastructure. But I hope that as Congress continues to consider this and determine how much money should be put in it, they will remember some other things. We've got to build a lot of highways -- or bridges, if you will -- to the 21st century. We have to have a road that will make Social Security strong in the 21st century. We have to have a road that will make our children's environment better in the 21st century. We have to have a road that will guarantee universal high-quality, high-standards education in the 21st century.

I think we have to have a road that will guarantee that people will not have to choose between being good parents and good children, and that we will act on the overwhelming weight of the evidence about the importance of the earliest years in the child's life.

Now, there are choices to be made, and it is wrong to pretend that there are no choices here. We now have the opportunity because of the good fortune that we enjoy as a people, because of the solvency of the budget, to take a major step forward in child care; to build that part of our national infrastructure. You look around at all these children today, and at their parents beaming about them -- I don't really believe that any part of our infrastructure is more important than they are.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Q Mr. President, do you propose tax cuts for mothers who want to stay home?

THE PRESIDENT: I'm glad you didn't stay home today, Sam. (Laughter.)

Q What do you think of the idea of tax cuts for a stay-at-home mom?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we need to get into a negotiation. We need to get started talking seriously about what we're going to do.

Q Would you be open to it?

THE PRESIDENT: I'll be happy to talk to them, but we've got to -- are we going to make a serious effort here? We need to have a discussion about it.

Q So you are willing to negotiate, then?

THE PRESIDENT: I'm willing to negotiate with anybody who wants to help people raise their children better so that people can succeed at home and at work. It's not an either-or deal. That's why we had the \$500 tax credit last time, children's tax credit, because we wanted to help all parents. We're not against helping all parents. But the question is, most parents are in the work force and we have to do something serious about it. We have to decide, are we going to do it, or not.

Q Children's advocates, Mr. President -- children's advocates --

Q What do you think of McDougal testifying today?

Q Did the French betray the effort in Bosnia to bring Karadzic --

Q Mr. President, did the French soldiers prevent Mr. Karadzic from being arrested?



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REMARKS BY VICE PRESIDENT AL GORE  
NATIONAL WOMEN'S LAW CENTER DINNER  
Thursday, November 19, 1998

[acknowledgements from advance]

And I want to join you in celebrating the leadership and scholarship of tonight's honoree, Judy Areen, the remarkable Dean of the Georgetown Law Center. Judy makes a difference because she fights for what is right -- and I know all of us are grateful.

You know, every time I see one of those award ceremonies, I can't help thinking of last year's Academy Awards...[Billy Crystal joke...Groucho...]

It is a special privilege for me to join you for this 26th annual dinner. For no organization has done more than the Women's Law Center to open doors that had been barred shut; to smash through the glass ceiling that still exists in far too many places; to heed the words of Elizabeth Cady Stanton at Seneca Falls, 150 years ago: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal."

For me, that cause has always been very close to home. Some of you may know that my State of Tennessee was the final state to ratify the 19th Amendment -- giving women across this nation the right to vote. A legislator named Harry Burns cast the deciding vote. He was planning on voting "no." But then he got a letter from his mother, which read: "Be a good boy, Harry, and do the right thing." He did -- and the rest is history.

Thanks to so many of you, we have come a long way in the struggle for full and equal opportunity. It was just thirty years ago that a prominent sociologist wrote: "By the turn of the century, if anything remains more or less unchanged, it will be the role of women."

And it was just a few years later that the administrative staff of the Center for Law and Social Policy looked out on a world where equal pay wasn't even a goal, where the newly-enacted Title IX wasn't even enforced, and where pregnancy didn't mean maternity leave, it meant job discrimination. So those determined young women presented their male colleagues with a few simple demands: better pay, the hiring of women lawyers, a new focus on women's rights, and no more serving coffee. That is how Marcia Greenberger became the first lawyer in Washington to work full-time on women's issues. And that is how the Women's Law Center was born.

quality after-school care -- to give children a safe, supervised place to go in those crucial hours after the school bell rings, but before the work whistle blows.

We have a lot more to do. Together, we must work to save Social Security for future generations. And we must recognize that Social Security is especially important for American women -- because they live longer, they earn less, and they often retire with smaller pensions and fewer savings. That is why it is so important that you have your voices heard as we move forward in this critical debate. Together, we have an obligation to save Social Security, and to do it in the right way.

We're working for a healthier future for women and families.

We made regular mammograms more affordable for women on Medicare, and more than doubled research for breast cancer. And we have made important progress -- identifying the first breast cancer gene, and launching the clinical trials that will some day prevent this painful and all-too-common disease.

Now we want to make sure women take advantage of these stunning medical advances without fear of discrimination. We are fighting for a new law that would stop health plans and employers from discriminating on the basis of genetic information.

We also need to make sure women get the best health care, not just the cheapest. The fact is, women are less likely to be referred to specialists, and three times as likely to be told their medical condition is "all in their head." That's why we fought so hard in the last Congress for a Patients' Bill of Rights -- and we're going to keep fighting in this new Congress.

ST. PETER...TAXIDERMIST/VETERINARIAN...DEAD MAN...

We must confront the silent but sinister threat of domestic violence -- a plague which touches 840,000 women a year.

I remember, during my days as a cub reporter for the Tennessean in the early 70's, being shocked by the number of calls about acts of domestic violence. And back then, America was simply not meeting this challenge -- not because we lacked the will, but because people often refused to even acknowledge the problem.

We've come a long way since then. We passed the Violence Against Women Act, which provided more support for the victims of domestic violence, and tougher punishment for the perpetrators.

And just two weeks ago, I was proud to announce new measures to protect

the victims of domestic violence -- by helping police departments enforce protection orders from other states, and by making it dramatically easier to obtain new Social Security numbers -- for the thousands of women for whom safety can only be found in starting over.

Of course, when it comes to women's health, there is no more fundamental challenge than protecting a woman's reproductive health. That means guaranteeing a woman's right to choose -- and making abortion safe, legal, and rare.

I want to thank Duffy for mentioning my role at the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development -- where we shaped an action plan for family planning and education around the world. And every time Congress has tried to play politics with a woman's right to choose -- imposing gag rules, and attaching anti-choice language to any bill they can think of -- we have stopped them. And if they try it again, we'll stop them again.

You see, some of us still remember the days of back-alley abortions -- when ending a pregnancy often meant risking one's life. That is why we cannot bow to those who would chip away at these freedoms through legislation, intimidation, legal challenges, and illegal protests.

We have met every challenge, legal and illegal. We passed the Freedom of Choice Access Act, to protect women's access to clinics -- and to protect them from violence.

But the recent, hateful clinic bombings and the brutal, shameless slaying of Dr. Slepian make us realize that we must do more. That is why Attorney General Reno created the National Task Force on Violence Against Health Care Providers -- to work with the nation's U.S. Attorneys to make clinics safe and secure. To us, freedom of choice also means freedom from fear in making that choice.

And reproductive freedom is also about the right and responsibility to prevent unwanted pregnancies. That is why we insisted on an increase in funding for family planning services -- while fighting back restrictions that would have required parental consent. And as the nation's largest employer, we are setting an example by requiring the 300 federal health plans to cover contraceptives. Women must have the right to choose. But let us do all we can to prevent them from having to make that difficult choice.

In all of these areas -- in opportunity and in fundamental fairness, in health care and in reproductive choice -- we have made great strides. And on so many issues, you have led the way.

But some of our greatest challenges are challenges not just of law, but of the

human heart and mind. As Elizabeth Cady Stanton said: "a mind...whose aspirations and ambitions rise no higher than the roof that shelters it, is necessarily dwarfed in its proportions."

We must strive toward the day when all Americans see one another as equals -- and when we realize that the interests of men and women are truly one. We must widen the boundaries of our own imaginations -- and deepen the meaning of justice and fairness.

For this past quarter-century, the Women's Law Center has given voice to those aspirations. You are proving that "with the law on your side, great things are possible." *[their unofficial motto]* And with the hard work and dedication of the people in this room, I believe they're not just possible -- they're inevitable. So keep up the good work -- and let's keep working, for the next 26 years. Thank you.