

President William J. Clinton
Prepared Remarks
Radio Address to the Nation
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Good morning. This week, the people of Israel gave the world a powerful example of democracy in action -- and set an example for all those who cherish the right to choose their leaders with their voices and their votes.

Yesterday, I called Prime-Minister-elect Netanyahu to congratulate him on his victory. I want to tell you what I told him: the United States is more determined than ever to stand with the people of Israel and all the peacemakers in the region to reach the goal we share: a comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict and a secure peace for all the people of the Middle East.

These past few years, we have come so far toward that goal: peace between Israel and its Palestinian and Jordanian neighbors . . . Israel's growing acceptance throughout the Middle East. But with every step toward peace, its enemies grow more desperate -- with bullets and bombs. As Israel continues to take risks for peace, the United States will work with Prime Minister-elect Netanyahu to minimize those risks -- and to help Israel achieve the secure peace its people want.

I also spoke to outgoing Prime Minister Shimon Peres. I told him to take comfort in history's judgment. Decades from now, people will look back and see in Shimon Peres one of the great peacemakers of our time. His vision of peace is becoming a reality. Now, the strength of the partnership between Israel and the United States can allow us to keep moving forward -- and to make sure that the fears the enemies of peace cause us today never overwhelm our hope for tomorrow.

Now I'd like to turn to our home front and some of our most important citizens, our children. Some of them have joined me with their parents here in the Oval Office, and later today, they'll join tens of thousands of people to show their support for America's young people at the Stand for Children at the Lincoln Memorial.

This is an important time for America's children. They're growing up in a world that is changing rapidly. They need our help more than any generation before them. My wife, Hillary, says that children are not rugged individualists; they depend on us -- their parents and communities -- to love them, guide them, provide for them, defend them. That's as it should be. Their future, and ours, depends on how well we do our job.

If society sends our children the wrong signals, we should work together to change that. That's why I have proposed strict limits on tobacco advertising. That's why we're giving parents the V-chip and persuaded the TV networks to develop a ratings system, so parents can control the shows children watch. That's why I support parents and communities who want to cut crime and improve discipline by adopting school uniforms and community

curfews.

We are immunizing our children, and now we have the highest number of immunizations ever. We enacted the Family and Medical Leave law, so parents can now take time away from their jobs to be with a newborn or an ill child. We increased Head Start funding. And we're making sure that teenage mothers stay in school and turn their lives around.

All of this makes a difference. But none of it matters as much as the most basic of all protection for young people -- their health. Without medical care, a child cannot live a full life.

That is why I deeply oppose the Republican plan to repeal the guarantee of quality health care for children. For three decades, Medicaid has been our national commitment that poor children, pregnant women, people with disabilities, older Americans will never be denied health care because they can't afford it. Today, middle class parents know that in the awful event their child is disabled in an accident and their savings are gone, they will get help to keep their child at home. Under the Republican plan, hundreds of thousands of disabled children could lose help for home care.

This plan says to millions of children -- if you can't afford care, too bad. It says to people with disabilities -- if you don't have insurance, sorry, come back tomorrow. It would amount to child neglect for a whole generation. I vetoed it last year when the Republican Congress shut down the government in an effort to force me to sign it. And if they send it to me again, I will veto it again.

The Republicans are threatening to attach this proposal to welfare reform. For two decades, I've worked to end welfare as we know it. I want to require work, to impose strict time limits, and to crack down on child support enforcement. We can reach agreement on sweeping, bipartisan welfare reform. But I will never accept the repeal of guaranteed health care for poor children or disabled people or older Americans or pregnant women. And I don't care what bill they attach it to.

I ask the Congress to put politics aside. Where our children are concerned, we should stand together, and we should not be small. Our children are counting on us. Thanks for listening.