

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT BILL SIGNING CEREMONY FOR
THE RYAN WHITE REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 1996
Roosevelt Room
May 20, 1996

Good morning. Senator Kassebaum, Senator Hatch, Senator Frist, Congressmen Waxman and Gunderson and Congresswoman Pelosi. And of course, the people who came in with me -- our AIDS Policy Director Patsy Fleming, and Jeanne White, who deserves a lot of credit for this day. I am pleased to be here to sign legislation to continue the Ryan White Care Act for the next five years.

I also want to thank Secretary Shalala, who is in Geneva, and Senator Kennedy, who couldn't be with us today but who has been a real leader on this issue. I want to thank all of you representing dozens of organizations in this room who are on the front lines of this struggle; and also those whom you represent all across America who could not be here in the room today, but who have done their part as well.

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We are not powerless in the face of this challenge -- look how far we've come. At one time AIDS was thought of as inevitably the end of life, the death of hope. But today, through the twin miracles of science and spirit, we're making great progress. People are living longer; infection rates are going down among a number of previously high-risk groups; there is hope for a cure.

We know that AIDS affects all Americans. Every person with HIV or AIDS is someone's son or daughter, brother or sister, parent or grandparent. We cannot allow discrimination of any kind to blind us to what we must do.

The Ryan White Care Act has been a big part of America's progress. Since it became law in 1990, this bill has helped hundreds of thousands of people to get the care they need in clinics and doctors' offices. It's kept people out of hospitals so they could be cared for at home, surrounded by families and loved ones. It's paid for the growing assortment of promising drugs that are helping so many people with AIDS to live longer and healthier lives. I'm proud that the FDA has speeded up approval of these new drugs.

I'm also very pleased that funding for this program has more than doubled in the last three and a half years. And that's very important, because, as all of you in this room know, it fills the gaps in the Medicaid program -- half the people who are infected get their care through the Ryan White Care Act and, of course, 90 percent of the children do.

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In the last year alone, there has been a 10-percent reduction in the number of infected children. It is estimated that we can actually end this tragic form of transmission by the end of this century, just four years away. It is our job to make that happen.

But even as we celebrate our progress, we shouldn't forget that the fight is not over. We have to do more to stop the rising tide of infection among women, communities of color, and young people -- especially young gay men. Until there is a cure, we cannot and must not rest.

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In his autobiography, Ryan White describes himself as "just another kid from Kokomo." We know he was much more than that. He taught a nation to care instead of hate, to embrace people living with AIDS as a part of our American family, to extend always the hand of hope. There are others in this room who have children who are a lot like him. I thank all of you, and I thank all of you who have fought this battle for so long.

This legislation offers hope for another five years. Let us all pray that no President will ever have to sign another bill because, by then, we will have found a cure for AIDS and a vaccine to protect every American.

Let me again thank the members of Congress who are here and note that this bill passed by a voice vote in the Senate and, with only four dissenting votes in the House of Representatives, I believe 414 votes for. So that's a great tribute to the members of Congress in both parties who spoke out in favor of this. And I thank those who are here, and Senator Kennedy especially, for what they have all done.

Thank you very much.

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT BILL SIGNING CEREMONY FOR
THE RYAN WHITE REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 1996
Roosevelt Room
May 20, 1996

Good morning. Senator Kassebaum, Senator Hatch, Senator Frist, Congressmen Waxman and Gunderson and Congresswoman Pelosi. And of course, the people who came in with me -- our AIDS Policy Director Patsy Fleming, and Jeanne White, who deserves a lot of credit for this day. I am pleased to be here to sign legislation to continue the Ryan White Care Act for the next five years.

I also want to thank Secretary Shalala, who is in Geneva, and Senator Kennedy, who couldn't be with us today but who has been a real leader on this issue. I want to thank all of you representing dozens of organizations in this room who are on the front lines of this struggle; and also those whom you represent all across America who could not be here in the room today, but who have done their part as well.

And let me once again say a special thanks to Jeanne White for standing here today. Your fine son became a hero to many of us. He was a brave young man who taught America the truth about AIDS. He helped people all over the world to understand that people with AIDS deserve not only the best medical care, but also our compassion and our love. And we're eternally grateful for that.

It's hard to believe, but AIDS has now been with us for nearly two decades. In that time, more than half a million Americans have been diagnosed, more than 300,000 of our fellow citizens have died. AIDS has taken too many friends and relatives and loved ones from every one of us in this room. It has shaken the faith of many, but it has inspired a remarkable community spirit, as evidenced by your presence here today.

We are not powerless in the face of this challenge -- look how far we've come. At one time AIDS was thought of as inevitably the end of life, the death of hope. But today, through the twin miracles of science and spirit, we're making great progress. People are living longer; infection rates are going down among a number of previously high-risk groups; there is hope for a cure.

We know that AIDS affects all Americans. Every person with HIV or AIDS is someone's son or daughter, brother or sister, parent or grandparent. We cannot allow discrimination of any kind to blind us to what we must do.

The Ryan White Care Act has been a big part of America's progress. Since it became law in 1990, this bill has helped hundreds of thousands of people to get the care they need in clinics and doctors' offices. It's kept people out of hospitals so they could be cared for at home, surrounded by families and loved ones. It's paid for the growing assortment of promising drugs that are helping so many people with AIDS to live longer and healthier lives. I'm proud that the FDA has speeded up approval of these new drugs.

I'm also very pleased that funding for this program has more than doubled in the last three and a half years. And that's very important, because, as all of you in this room know, it fills the gaps in the Medicaid program -- half the people who are infected get their care through the Ryan White Care Act and, of course, 90 percent of the children do.

As I sign the legislation, I also want to note that today, the Department of Health and Human Services has awarded \$350 million in funds authorized under this bill in all 50 states and now in 49 U.S. cities, up from 23 just three years ago. We're also making available another \$52 million to help more people with AIDS get the drugs they need. And this legislation will help states to capitalize on a recent medical breakthrough: we now know that with voluntary testing and the use of AZT, we can prevent HIV transmission from a pregnant mother to her child.

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