



National Prostate Cancer Coalition

Working Together to End Prostate Cancer as a Serious Health Concern for Men and Their Families

May 28, 1998

To: Melanne Vorveer, Chief of Staff for the First Lady
From: Jay Hedlund, President, National Prostate Cancer Coalition
Re: Suggestions for Father's Day radio address

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I am writing to suggest that for the upcoming Father's Day – Sunday, June 21 – President Clinton focus on men's health, specifically prostate cancer.

We urge the President to use his radio address on the Saturday before Father's Day to highlight the issue of prostate cancer, its impact on families, the need to increase federal cancer research funding that will help find a cure for cancers like prostate cancer and the need for men to take more responsibility for their health.

Among the points the President could make are:

- There are exciting new advances in cancer research in the news almost daily – now is the time where an additional national commitment, as proposed by the President, can lead to breakthroughs that will save lives.
- The Administration has proposed a major new cancer research initiative that would increase cancer research funding by more than 65 percent over the next five years – Congress needs to fund this initiative.
- On this Father's Day weekend it is appropriate to focus on prostate cancer – where more research can save thousands of lives. Prostate cancer is the most diagnosed non-skin cancer in the country, 40,000 American men die from prostate cancer annually and nearly 200,000 Americans will be diagnosed with the disease this year; it is the second leading cause of cancer death for men (behind lung cancer); and it is the third leading cause of death for men (behind heart disease and lung cancer).
- Prostate cancer strikes the African-American community particularly hard. African-Americans have the highest prostate cancer incidence rate in the world and the mortality rate for African-Americans is more than twice as high than that for any other ethnic group in the country.
- While increased research is essential, men also need to take personal responsibility for their own health. Men over the age of fifty and younger men at risk – such as African-Americans or those with a family history of prostate cancer – can help protect their health by having a prostate test annually.

- Men also need to become stronger advocates for their own health. More men should follow the example of Bob Dole, General Norman Swazkopf and Arnold Palmer – each of whom have fought their own successful battle with prostate cancer and have spoken out on the need for men to get tested.
- Men can give a gift to their families by taking care of their health and being tested for prostate cancer – so that they will have many more years of good health to celebrate Father's Day with their families.

The President may want to consider doing an event or photo opportunity -- with one or more of the notable survivors mentioned above or others -- in conjunction with the radio address. Our coalition includes survivors and their families from around the country who would welcome the opportunity to work with you in raising awareness about prostate cancer.

Some other public events that are happening this spring could reinforce the message the President would deliver. First, CaP CURE, the prostate cancer research foundation founded by prostate cancer survivor Michael Milken, is conducting, along with Major League Baseball, a Home Run Challenge during the week of Father's Day. Every home run hit by Major League players that week will raise money for prostate cancer research.

Second, the Department of Defense this spring is releasing the first grants under the new prostate cancer Congressionally-Directed Medical Research Program funded by FY'97 and FY'98 appropriations. This terrific new program is modeled after the very successful breast cancer DoD research program that was started in 1992.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

**PRESIDENT ANNOUNCES HISTORIC PROSTATE CANCER RESEARCH GRANTS AT
THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND
HIGHLIGHTS THE ADMINISTRATION'S AMBITIOUS AGENDA TO FIGHT
PROSTATE CANCER
June 19, 1998**

Today, in his Father's day radio address, the President announced the release of over \$70 million at the Department of Defense for prostate cancer research. These largest-ever grants awarded by DoD that will make important contributions to the diagnosis and treatment of prostate cancer. This year over 180,000 men are expected to be diagnosed with prostate cancer and nearly 40,000 men are projected to die from this disease (virtually the same number of women who die from breast cancer). The President also renewed his call on Congress to pass comprehensive, bipartisan tobacco legislation which includes the President's proposals for historic, multi-year increases in cancer research at the National Institutes of Health and coverage of cancer clinical trials for Medicare beneficiaries. These two proposals complement the President's strong record in the war against cancer.

Background on Prostate Cancer. Prostate cancer accounts for 30 percent of cancer in men, and only lung cancer claims more cancer deaths for men. [NCI please include other information about prostate cancer -- how much costs annually, other stats]. Highlights of the President's ambitious agenda to fight prostate cancer include:

- ◆ **Releasing the Largest-Ever Grants at the Department of Defense (DoD) for Prostate Cancer Research.** The President announced that approximately \$XX million in grants *[DoD please fill in]* for prostate cancer are being awarded today and another \$xx will be announced in the next month. Before awarding these grants, the DoD conducted a multi-month consultative process with prostate cancer experts, patients, and advocates to find the best ways to fund encourage top-of-the-line research and received over 600 grant proposals. The President also announced that DoD is posting the recipients of these new grants on the Internet. This new prostate cancer research program builds on the widely-acclaimed peer-review breast cancer research program at DoD.
- ◆ **Proposing Unprecedented Multi-year Increases in Cancer Research at the National Institutes of Health.** The President's FY1999 Budget includes a historic 65 percent increase in cancer research at the National Institutes of Health over the next five years. Since the President took office, research in prostate cancer at the National Cancer Institute has increased by 200 percent to \$96 million in FY1998. This year alone there are 450 research projects at the NCI on prostate cancer, including prevention research

studying the environmental, dietary and other influences on this disease; and research to develop more effective interventions and design more effective screening techniques. There is also new genetic research in this area, as scientists recently located the first gene that predisposes men to prostate cancer. Also, prostate cancer was the first cancer studied as part of NCI's recently launched Cancer Genome Anatomy Project, which resulted in the discovery of dozens of new genes that may be associated with the development of prostate cancer.

- ◆ **Supporting Coverage for Cancer Clinical Trials for Medicare beneficiaries.** Senator McCain's tobacco legislation includes the President's proposal for a three-year, \$750 million demonstration to cover Medicare beneficiaries' patient care costs associated with certain Federally-sponsored cancer clinical trials. Medicare currently does not cover cancer clinical trials. This proposal is particularly important for prostate cancer patients because: most of men with prostate cancer are Medicare beneficiaries, as fully 80 percent of those diagnosed with this disease are over age 65; the lack of participation of elderly men in trials has undermined clinical research for the treatment, prevention, and screening for this disease; and given promising new findings in research, NCI expects there may be an increase in clinical trials for prostate cancer??, creating a need for even more participants.
- ◆ **Proposing \$25 Million to Raise Awareness About Prostate Cancer Prevention, Treatment, Screening for Minorities.** African-American men have an incidence rate over 30 percent higher than white men and a mortality rate over 50 percent for prostate cancer. The President's race and health initiative includes \$25 million over the next five years at the Center for Disease Control to promote awareness about who is at risk for prostate cancer, current screening options, and the best treatment options for those who are diagnosed with this disease. This investment, in addition to clinical trials underway at the NIH, will also help determine why there is such variation in the prevalence and mortality of prostate cancer.

These Proposals Build on the President's Strong Record in the War Against Cancer Including:

- **Advocating for a Federally-Enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights.** The President has called on Congress to pass Federally enforceable consumer health care protections before it adjourns this fall. This patients' bill of rights contain a range of protections that are particularly important to people with cancer, including guaranteed access to needed health care specialists, continuity of

care if a health provider is dropped in the middle of treatment, and access to a meaningful internal and external appeals process for consumers to resolve their differences with their health plans and health care providers. The nation's health care system has changed dramatically, with 160 million Americans now in managed care plans. This legislation will ensure that whether Americans have traditional health insurance or managed care, they are assured quality care.

- **Pushing for Legislation Preventing Health Insurers and Employers from Discriminating on the Basis of Genetic Discrimination.** Scientists recently discovered the first gene related to prostate cancer and more progress in understanding the genetic basis of this disease is expected in the near future. However, progress in genetics has the potential to be undermined by fear of genetic discrimination. One study showed that 63 percent of Americans would not take a genetic test if their health insurers or employers could get access to the results. To ensure that new advances in genetics are used to improve health rather than to discriminate against individuals, the President has called for legislation prohibiting the use of genetic screening to discriminate in health insurance and employment.
- **Enacted New Prostate Cancer Screening Benefit for Medicare Beneficiaries.** As part of the historic Medicare reforms in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, the President signed into law a series of new preventive benefits for Medicare beneficiaries, including coverage of prostate cancer screening. Starting in 2000, Medicare will cover prostate cancer screening.