

**NLWJC - Kagan**

**DPC - Box 036 - Folder 003**

**POTUS Press Conference -  
Q&A 1/20/98 (Lehrer)**

**Questions and Answers on Health Care**  
**January 20, 1998**

**Q. How do you respond to critics of the Medicare buy-in proposal who charge that it is not and cannot be self-financing?**

**A:** We simply do not believe they understand the policy.

First of all, the President's proposal for Americans ages 62 to 65 explicitly would direct the Medicare actuary to set premiums at levels necessary to pay for the cost of this program. Unlike any other previous changes to the Medicare program, this policy asks the people benefiting to pay for the costs associated with this coverage. Each year, the actuary would be required to adjust those premiums to reflect actual experience to ensure that they are sufficient to offset costs. [This is the same career actuary whose projections about the financial status of Medicare are relied upon by Medicare's Trustees, Republicans and Democrats alike. We have full confidence that his estimates are sound.]

Second, from the beginning, we have acknowledged --and paid for -- any up-front costs associated with this proposal. The day the President announced the proposal we laid out the \$2 billion cost that was associated with this proposal. We also committed to completely offset these costs through a package of fraud, waste and abuse initiatives that will be included in the President's budget proposal.

**Follow Up: If this is self-financed, why is there any cost associated with this proposal?**

A. To ensure that the premium is affordable, we designed the 62-65 buy-in proposal so that there were two premium payments. Since the second premium is not paid until age 65, there is a short-term "loan" to participants to cover this cost. It is paid back, with interest, by the participants and the temporary cost is completely offset by anti-fraud, waste and abuse savings.

**BACKGROUND:** The first premium payment, about \$300, reflects the average cost of this age group and would be paid monthly before participants turn 65. The second premium, about \$15 per month per year for each year participants enrolled in Medicare before age 65, would be paid at the time of Medicare eligibility (at age 65). This amount offsets the additional costs resulting from the fact that participants are expected to be sicker than average.

**Q: How do you feel about the selection of Senator Breaux as the Chair of the Medicare Commission and Congressman Bill Thomas as the Administrative Chair?**

**A:** I believe that Senator Breaux is a fine choice to chair the Commission. His years of experience on the Finance and Aging Committees, as well as his strong track record of successful bipartisan negotiations on numerous policy fronts will serve the Commission and the nation well. I am also confident that Congressman Thomas will make significant contributions to the Commission in his capacity as administrative chair. As Chair of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health, he has demonstrated extraordinarily leadership and an impressive knowledge about Medicare and the challenges it faces. I look forward to the Commission getting their important work underway.

**Q. Isn't your new Medicare buy-in policy just another example of a government take-over of the private health insurance system?**

**A.** Absolutely not. This is a carefully targeted proposal that is designed to make sure that older Americans have access to health care coverage. Currently, older Americans have less access to employer-based health insurance, are twice as likely to have health problems, and are at greater risk of losing coverage. Some have no insurance options, and others are left to buy into the individual insurance market, which can be prohibitively expensive because of their poorer health. This policy helps this vulnerable population get access to health care coverage by:

- **Enabling Americans Ages 62 to 65 Buy into the Medicare Program**, by paying a full premium.
- **Providing Vulnerable Displaced Workers over 55 Access to Medicare** by offering those who have involuntarily lost their jobs and their health care coverage a similar Medicare buy-in option.
- **Providing Americans Over 55 Whose Companies Reneged on Their Commitment to Provide Retiree Health Benefits A New Health Option**, by extending (COBRA) coverage until age 65.

**Q. Isn't this policy a Medicare entitlement expansion, at a time when Medicare can least afford it?**

A. Absolutely not. There is no impact on the Medicare Trust Fund because participants would pay their full premium over time, and any of the temporary costs associated with this proposal are completely offset by Medicare fraud, abuse and waste savings.

This Administration has made strengthening and preserving the Medicare Trust Fund a top priority since I took office. In 1993, we enacted a budget --without the vote of a single Republican -- that extended the life of the Trust Fund through 2002. The Balanced Budget I signed into law last summer extended the life of the Trust Fund beyond 2010. This new policy is a carefully targeted policy that will in no way compromise our commitment to strengthen the Medicare program.

**Q. Shouldn't you wait for the Medicare Commission to make its recommendations before you propose such policies?**

A. The purpose of the Commission is to develop proposals for the overall financing of Medicare. Because this policy is fully financed, it has no overall impact on the Medicare Trust Fund, and will not conflict with the Commission's work in this area. The proposal addresses an important problem in our health care system without interfering in any way with the overall financing of Medicare, which the Commission is looking into

**Q: Won't this policy cause people to retire early?**

A. No. There is no financial incentive to retire since participants would pay a higher premium than they would in their current, subsidized employer health plans. And, since participants would have to pay the full premium, they may need to continue to work to afford the coverage. In fact, this option may actually encourage people to start second careers (e.g., opening their own stores; becoming a consultant) since they could purchase Medicare if they leave their current job.

**Q. Does this proposal create incentives for employers to drop retiree health coverage?**

A. For today's retirees, this proposal actually lessens the incentives for employers to drop their health coverage. Such employers would have to allow their retirees to buy into their current workforce's health plan if they break their promise of providing retiree health benefits.

**Q: What do you think of the Norwood/D'Amato consumer bill of rights**

**legislation?**

- A:** I applaud Congressman Norwood and Senator D'Amato for their leadership on this issue. We are encouraged that so many Republicans and Democrats understand the need for national legislation. There are a number of bills on the Hill at this time. Some Members have indicated their interest in modifying their legislation before Congress comes back. We look forward to working with all Republicans and Democrats as we move forward throughout this process.

**Questions and Answers on Food Safety**  
**January 19, 1998**

**Q: What steps is the Administration taking to improve food safety?**

**A:** Last year we launched a new Presidential food safety initiative, and added more than \$40 million to the FY '98 budget. With that money we started putting in place new science-based preventive systems to improve the safety of seafood, meat and poultry and began work on a new early warning system to help detect and respond to outbreaks of foodborne illness. This year, our budget will seek an even more substantial increase in resources to improve food safety. The resources will go to a variety of initiatives, including: giving FDA authority to prevent the import of produce from countries without safety precautions equivalent to our own; hiring FDA inspectors to improve the safety of our nation's fruits and vegetables, both domestic and imported; developing new ways for federal inspectors to detect food-borne illnesses in meat and poultry and determine the source of contamination; improving educational outreach on proper food handling; and further expanding our early warning system and strengthening state surveillance activities for foodborne illnesses.

**Q. A recent story revealed that USDA did not close down a plant despite 1,700 violations. What are you doing to make sure our meat and poultry are safe to eat?**

**A.** We have to keep improving our food safety systems. And I am committing more resources than ever to the problem, and modernizing food safety for meat and fruits and vegetables and the water we drink. There are several important facts to remember in regard to this specific story. First, although the inspectors did not close the plant -- and in my view that was a wrong decision -- they did take actions to correct the plant's bad practices and to prevent all unsafe food they found from reaching the public. Second, those events occurred in 1996 -- before my Administration began implementing the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system for meat. Under this system, inspectors will document food safety violations; they will shut down the plant where there are repeat failures; and they will insist that the plant take a wide range of measures to prevent any future contamination before the plant can reopen. Finally, the Administration has asked Congress for additional enforcement authority to fine companies for violations of food safety standards. Currently, USDA can't fine companies that violate food safety standards.

**Questions and Answers on Crime**  
**January 20, 1998**

**Crime: General**

**Q: Mr. President, over the past few months you have taken a lot of credit for the falling crime rates. Do you really think it is fair for the federal government to claim credit for what is overwhelmingly a local issue? And don't changing demographics and the expanding economy have more to do with falling crime rates than your Administration's efforts?**

**A:** I think its appropriate for all of us --the federal government, police, prosecutors, and community leaders --to claim some credit for driving down the crime rates to their lowest level in 25 years. Together, we fought for more police in our communities, fewer guns on our streets, tougher punishment for violent offenders, and better opportunities for our kids --and used these tools to make a difference. Sure, our economic plan and other factors have played a role in cutting crime, but our tough, smart anti-crime strategy has definitely had an impact. For instance:

- We have helped to fund nearly 70,000 more police in thousands of cities across the country. Working with community residents, these new police have taken on all sorts of local crime problems --but especially violent crime. There were nearly 5,000 fewer murders in 1996 than when I took office.
- We have kept guns out of the hands of criminals. An estimated 300,000 fugitives and felons have been stopped from purchasing guns. We have cut the number of legitimate federal guns dealers by more than two-thirds (from 252,799 to 88,590).
- We have enacted tougher penalties for violent and sex offenders; spent more than \$2 billion to help states incarcerate them; supported community notification of released sex offenders; and established a national sex predator registry.
- We have repeatedly put forth the largest anti-drug budgets ever. This month, we launched an unprecedented paid media campaign to make sure our kids are getting the message about the dangers of drugs. And I just recently signed a directive to help close the revolving door of crime and drug use.

Over the coming year, my balanced budget will continue to build on these successful efforts. We will continue to work hand-in-hand with local communities on increasing public safety and reducing drug use.

Also, our top law enforcement priority will be to pass a juvenile crime bill that

allows cities across the country to implement tough, smart strategies like the highly successful Boston model --where no juvenile was killed with a gun for two and half years. Congress should finally pass a juvenile crime bill that provides more prosecutors and probation officers to crack down on gangs, guns and drugs. They should extend the Brady Bill to violent juveniles, and prohibit them from buying guns on their 21st birthday. And they should help principals keep more of our schools open later, so that adults can be more involved in the lives of our youth -- and teach them right from wrong.

### **Crime: Juvenile Crime**

**Q. What is your position on juvenile crime legislation under consideration by the Congress?**

**A.** I have made juvenile crime and gangs my top law enforcement priority over the next four years. My goal is to enact a juvenile crime bill that allows cities across the country to implement tough, smart strategies like the highly successful Boston model --where no juvenile was killed with a gun for two and half years.

America's Anti-Gang and Youth Violence Strategy must declare war on gangs; target funding for additional local prosecutors to pursue, prosecute, and punish gang members; extend the Brady Law so violent teen criminals will never have the right to purchase a gun; and target resources to keep schools open late, on weekends, and in the summer to keep young people off the street and out of trouble.

I opposed the juvenile crime legislation passed in the House last year because it didn't provide any of these necessary measures to give law enforcement, prosecutors, and parents the tools they need to combat gangs and youth violence in their communities. The Senate leadership has said that they plan to take up their own legislation in the early part of this year. We made some progress in the appropriations bill I signed last fall to start funding some new tools to combat juvenile crime. As for any comprehensive juvenile crime bill, I am committed to work with Congress to ensure passage of legislation that will give our children the safest and most secure future as possible.

### **Drugs: Directive on Drugs in Prisons**

**Q. A study was recently released by the Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse documenting significant problems of drug abuse among individuals involved in the criminal justice system. Can you explain what**



**you are doing about this problem?**

A. Last week, I signed a directive to the Attorney General calling on her to take the necessary steps to:

(1) Require states to determine the level of drug use in their prisons and report annually on their progress. Under current law and federal guidelines, states are required to submit drug testing and intervention plans for their federal prison grant funding. My directive calls on the Attorney General to amend the guidelines to require states to also include a baseline report of their prison drug abuse problem, and to report every year thereafter to chart the progress they are making to reduce drug use and availability.

(2) Give states the flexibility to use their federal prison funds for drug detection, offender testing, and drug treatment. The Attorney General will draft and transmit to the Congress legislation to give states the flexibility to use their federal prison construction and substance abuse treatment funds for the full range of drug testing, sanctions, and treatment for offenders under criminal justice supervision. This will allow states to tap into the nearly \$8 billion in prison funds authorized by the 1994 Crime Law (about \$2 billion of which already have been appropriated to date).

(3) Require states to enact stiffer penalties for drug trafficking into and within correctional facilities. Finally, my directive calls on the Attorney General to draft legislation, in consultation with the states, that would require states to enhance their penalties for drug trafficking into and within correctional facilities as a condition of receiving prison construction funds. The 1994 Omnibus Crime Bill contains tough penalties for similar crimes. I believe we must have "zero tolerance" for drug use and trafficking within our nation's prison system.

I also announced that my FY 99 budget will include \$197 million for a series of initiatives to promote coerced abstinence and treatment in the criminal justice system.

**Crime: Prisons**

**Q. The Justice Department recently issued a study showing that we are incarcerating over 1.7 million people in this country. What do you think about the extraordinary rise in incarceration level?**

A. I am concerned about it. But part of the reason why the incarceration number is so high is because today, serious offenders --including violent and sex offenders-- are serving more of their sentences and are not being let out because of prison overcrowding. In the historic 1994 Omnibus Crime Act, we

enacted Truth-in Sentencing and substantial funding for state prison construction to make sure these dangerous offenders serve their sentences, and I think that's a good thing. I also think it is important to note that crime has been declining for five years in a row, and we've seen a slowing in the growth of state and federal prisoners over the last two years-- both of which are positive signs.

But clearly, prisons alone will not solve the crime problem. We need to attack the problem on all fronts, which is why I recently signed a directive to address the massive drug problem among our nation's prisoners. With the inmate population, we have an opportunity to shut the revolving door between drug use and crime, by adopting zero tolerance for drug use and trafficking in our prisons and demanding coerced abstinence, testing, and treatment to break prisoners of their drug addictions-- the reason why many of them are incarcerated in the first place. We also need to continue to support community policing across the country, to help communities and law enforcement agencies prevent crime before it happens. And we need to pass a tough, smart juvenile crime bill that cracks down on violent youth gangs, but also gives our young people safe havens in the after school hours to help them stay out of trouble.

**Questions and Answers on Tobacco**  
**January 20, 1998**

**Q. Are you concerned by comments by some members of Congress that tobacco legislation may be getting stalled -- that you may not be serious about getting a bill -- and suggesting that you should take a more active role in pushing legislation?**

A. I am committed to enacting comprehensive bipartisan tobacco legislation. So any comments to the contrary are just wrong. We are making very solid progress towards enacting comprehensive tobacco legislation that will reduce teen smoking. I've proposed a very clear set of principles about what should be in the bill -- the first issue being that this is about protecting kids, not money or political advantage. I've met personally with senior members involved in this issue -- I've assured them that we want to get this done, that we will. Our staff has met with members of both parties and will continue to do so. And my budget will contain some details on how I think we should get this done -- on how much money the tobacco companies should pay and where it should go. This has been a long battle we have been fighting and we will stay with it, and it will make a difference to the health of millions of children over the next few years. We have to get it done.

**Q. Do recent events, the tobacco settlement in Texas or the release of documents showing some companies were marketing to children, diminish the need for legislation or the chance that it would get passed?**

A. No. It is a good sign that industry is being held accountable for the harms it has caused, and that we are getting information out about how the industry has hurt children. But that should serve as further impetus for comprehensive legislation. We need a comprehensive system of penalties to make sure companies reduce teen smoking, we need the FDA to have authority over tobacco products to protect our health, to make sure advertising doesn't go after our kids. So we need legislation, and it should be bi-partisan. I think all the attention from these events makes it clear why we need a national solution, and that we should try and get it done soon.

**Q. Your proposed budget call for a tax on tobacco products. How much money do you believe can be raised in this manner?**

A. I have urged Congress to pass comprehensive tobacco legislation to reduce teen smoking, and my proposed budget assumes some revenues from the passage of such legislation. It's very important to understand that these revenues need not come from a tax; they could result from industry payments and penalties pursuant to a settlement agreement. The revenues assumed in the budget will be consistent with my prior demand for a combination of industry payments and penalties to increase the price of cigarettes by up to \$1.50 over the next decade, as necessary to meet youth smoking reduction targets.

**Q. Are the revenue estimates reported in *The Wall Street Journal* accurate -- i.e., that your budget assumes that tobacco payments will raise \$10 billion in FY 99 and \$40 to \$60 billion over five years?**

A. I won't comment on particular budget numbers until we actually release the budget. The projected revenues we use in the budget will be consistent with what I have called for in the past: a combination of industry payments and penalties to increase the price of cigarettes by up to \$1.50 over the next decade, as necessary to meet youth smoking reduction targets.

**Q. There are various reports about how much money from tobacco legislation will go to the states, and whether the federal government has any right to this money. What do you think the states are entitled to?**

A. My first goal is to pass national tobacco legislation to reduce teen smoking. The specific allocation of monies is a secondary issue, which I will work to resolve with the states and Congress. Both the states and the Administration have worked hard to create the conditions for national legislation -- the states by bringing suit against the tobacco companies and the federal government by asserting regulatory power over them. I am confident we will be able to reach -- and to incorporate in legislation -- a mutually agreeable approach to the allocation issue that fully recognizes the states' contribution.

**Q. Why is national legislation necessary if each state can settle with the tobacco companies?**

A. First, it's unlikely that each state will be able to settle with the industry, given the range of state laws on the subject. Second and more important, individual state settlements cannot accomplish important objectives relating to the public health, such as giving FDA authority over tobacco products, establishing a comprehensive scheme of penalties for failure to reduce youth smoking, and putting into place a nationwide licensing system for the distribution of tobacco products. Settlements can ensure that the tobacco companies pay out money for some of the harm they have caused. But we need national legislation to put in place the kind of comprehensive regulatory measures that will protect the public health and our nation's children.

**Q. Some Republicans have begun to talk about enacting tobacco legislation piecemeal, with legislation on youth smoking this year. Would the Administration go along with such a plan?**

A. We believe that Congress must enact comprehensive tobacco legislation this year. We will not be able to reduce youth smoking -- let alone meet our other public health objectives -- without a comprehensive measure. To reduce youth smoking over the long

term, we must not only establish a system of penalties for failing to meet youth smoking targets, but also increase the price of cigarettes, guarantee FDA jurisdiction over tobacco, establish a licensing system, and regulate access and advertising. Those measures are also necessary to improve the health of adults. We shouldn't abandon the effort to enact comprehensive legislation before we've even started.

**Q. Will the President reject tobacco legislation that includes limits on liability, given the new RJ Reynolds documents?**

A. The new documents are horrific, but they only confirm what we've long suspected, while making the need for legislation in this area more clear than ever. Comprehensive legislation stands a far better chance of reducing youth smoking and protecting the public health than lawsuits brought by smokers against the industry. The President will focus on the legislation as a whole and ask whether it will reduce youth smoking and protect the public health. If it meets those objectives, he will sign it. As we've said before, limits on liability are not necessarily a dealbreaker; they should be weighed against, and viewed in light of, the public health elements of the legislation.

Of course, no one is talking about immunity from criminal prosecution: if tobacco industry officials committed perjury, lied to Congress, or committed other crimes, they will be prosecuted. The limits on liability contained in the AG's proposed settlement applied only to civil suits -- capping liability for civil damages at \$5 billion each year.

**Q. Lawyers in both Texas and Florida have asked for obscene amounts of money for their role in bringing about settlements with the tobacco industry. Will the President support a provision in national legislation to limit fees for lawyers?**

A. The President is primarily concerned with ensuring that tobacco legislation reduces youth smoking and protects the public health -- not with collecting and distributing money from a settlement. The lawyers who brought these suits have expended lots of time and effort, and deserve to be well recompensed for their work. But everyone agrees that fees shouldn't be wildly out of proportion to the work that was done.

**Questions and Answers on Abortion**  
**January 20, 1998**

**Q. Will you sign the Partial Birth Act, which has passed both the House and Senate with overwhelming majorities?**

A. No, because I am still not convinced that this bill adequately protects women from grievous harm. I have said over and over that if Congress were to add a narrow exception covering the few cases where this procedure is needed to prevent women in dire circumstances from suffering serious injury, then I would gladly sign the bill. But until Congress does add that narrow exception, I will veto the bill -- no matter how many votes there are in favor of it -- to protect the health of women.

**Q. Didn't you base your prior veto of the bill on false information -- i.e., that this procedure is performed only a few hundred times each year and only when women are in great danger?**

A. I vetoed the bill because there are a small group of women in desperate circumstances who need this procedure in order to save their lives or prevent serious injury to their health. Let's be clear: I've never said that these are the only circumstances in which the procedure is used; I've just said that these few women need to be protected. If Congress does so, I will gladly sign the bill, because I think this kind of procedure should be banned except when necessary to save the life of a woman or prevent serious harm to her health.

**Q. What do you think of the Republican National Committee's debate on the issue of refusing campaign funds to Republican candidates who support partial birth abortion?**

This is a matter of internal politics within the Republican party and I don't think it is for me to comment on. Abortion is a very divisive issue and that is one of the more important reasons we should resist efforts to politicize it.

**Q. According to a recent New York Times' poll, the American public believes that legalized abortion should be harder to get and less readily chosen. Doesn't this poll indicate a slippage in support for abortion rights and your Administration's support of abortion?**

A. As the New York Times' story on the poll said itself, the public's attitude towards abortion lines up with my own view: abortion should be safe, legal and rare. As a nation, our goal should be to protect choice while fostering responsible decision making and

reducing the number of abortions. I am proud of my Administration's efforts to prevent teen pregnancy, through our National Strategy to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and other efforts, and I am particularly encouraged that the rate of teen pregnancy has fallen to its lowest level in years.

According to the New York Times' poll, Americans also want to depoliticize the abortion issue. We should all resolve to tone down the hot rhetoric and ideological battles that have surrounded this issue far too long.

**Questions and Answers on Welfare Reform and Jobs**  
**January 20, 1998**

**Q: Even with the good economy, some people are concerned that there won't be enough jobs for all the welfare recipients who need work. Are you concerned about this issue?**

**A:** Right now, the nation's jobless rate is at its lowest level in a generation. We've created more than 14 million jobs since I took office. Nationally, we are creating enough jobs for individuals leaving welfare -- for example, the economy created 370,000 new jobs in December, far more than the roughly 60,000 adults who leave welfare each month.

But to make sure there will be enough jobs in every area of the country, I fought for and won a \$3 billion welfare-to-work fund in the Balanced Budget Act targeted specifically to high unemployment and high poverty areas where jobs may be scarce. I have also challenged companies all across the nation to hire welfare recipients -- over 2,500 have agreed so far -- and have committed the federal government to hire its fair share of workers from the welfare rolls.

**Background:**

On January 9th, the Labor Department released data showing that the number of jobs increased by 370,000 in December and that the unemployment rate stood at 4.7 percent. Since August 1996, about 180,000 people have left the welfare rolls each month, about 60,000 of whom are adults (the rest are the children in those families). Since you took office, the economy has created 14.3 million new jobs, and nearly 1.2 million adults have left the welfare rolls (for a total caseload decline of 3.8 million persons, both adults and children, or 27 percent). (These figures are from January 1993 through July 1997; we are holding newer numbers for you to announce in the State of the Union.)

**Q: You've said "We know now that welfare reform works." Can you tell us why you say so? Although the welfare rolls have gone down, isn't that due to the economy and harsh new rules like time limits?**

**A:** Welfare caseloads are the best measure we have right now of the success of welfare reform. As I announced in November, there are 3.8 million fewer people on welfare than when I took office and began to grant welfare reform waivers to 43 states -- and there are 1.9 million fewer welfare recipients than when I made welfare reform the law of the land.

I asked my Council of Economic Advisors to look at the role of the economy in reducing the welfare rolls, and they attributed about 40 percent of the decline to the strong economic growth, about one-third to the welfare reform waivers we granted, and the rest to other factors -- such as our decisions to increase the Earned Income Tax Credit, strengthen child support enforcement, and increase funding for child care.



Not enough time has passed for full scale research studies to be completed to tell us what recipients are doing once they leave the rolls, but we do know that almost all have left the rolls voluntarily, since very few time limits of any kind have gone into effect yet. Preliminary studies show that most people are leaving welfare for work, and I think even welfare reform critics have been pleasantly surprised by the progress so far.

**Q: There's been some reports of growing lines at food pantries and homeless shelters. Do you think this is due to welfare reform?**

**A:** We are always concerned about any report that hunger may be increasing, and will continue to monitor the situation closely. I do believe that this Administration's economic policies -- which produced an unemployment rate at its lowest level in a generation and reduced the poverty rate from 15.1 percent in 1993 to 13.7 percent in 1996 -- have gone a long way to help American families make ends meet.

Of course, I fought against Republican attempts to use welfare reform as an excuse to cut food stamps and school lunches, and I worked hard to restore funds for food stamps, as well as for SSI and Medicaid, in the Balanced Budget Agreement. We'll continue to work to restore food stamps, because I believe that cuts in that program have nothing to do with the real objective of welfare reform, which is to move people into good jobs.

**Background:**

A U.S. Conference of Mayors survey released in December found requests for emergency food assistance had increased by 16% in the year ending October 31, 1997. The cities responding to the survey said that the main causes were low-paying jobs, unemployment and other employment-related problems, and food stamp cuts. Because the survey was based on self-reported data from a non-representative sample of cities, we do not know how accurate it is. However, your budget will include an additional \$2.7 billion to restore food stamps to all legal immigrant families with children, elderly and disabled immigrants who entered the U.S. before August 1996, and certain refugees, asylees, and special immigrant groups (e.g. the Hmong).

**Questions & Answers on Child Care**  
**January 20, 1997**

**Q. What is your child care initiative?**

**A:** Last week, I announced an historic initiative to improve child care for America's working families. My FY 1999 budget will include **over \$20 billion over five years for child care, the largest single investment in child care in the nation's history.** This initiative responds to the struggles our nation's working parents face in finding child care that they can afford, trust, and rely on. My proposal will help working families pay for child care, build the supply of good after-school programs, improve the safety and quality of care, and promote early learning.

- **Doubles the number of children receiving child care subsidies** to more than two million by the year 2003 by increasing funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant by \$7.5 billion over 5 years.
- **Increases tax credits for three million working families to help them pay for child care** by investing \$5.2 billion over 5 years in the Child and Dependent Tax Credit. The President's proposal also provides a new tax credit for businesses that offer child care services for their employees.
- **Provides after-school care for 500,000 children per year** by expanding the 21st Century Community Learning Center program by \$800 million over 5 years to provide funds to school-community partnerships to establish or expand programs for school-age children.
- **Improves child care safety and quality and enhances early childhood development** by establishing a new Early Learning Fund as well as supporting enforcement of state child care health and safety standards, providing scholarships to up to 50,000 child care providers per year, and investing in research and consumer education.

Child Care Block Grant Increase	\$7.5 billion over five years
Child and Dependent Tax Credit Reform	\$5.2 billion over five years
Tax Credit for Businesses	\$500 million over five years
After-School Program	\$800 million over five years
Early Learning Fund	\$3 billion over five years
Head Start Increase	\$3.8 billion over five years
Standards Enforcement Fund	\$500 million over five years
Child Care Provider Scholarship Fund	\$250 million over five years
Research and Evaluation Fund	\$150 million over five years
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$21.7 billion over five years</b>

**Q. Since much of the funding of this proposal is based on the tobacco settlement, aren't you counting your chickens before they've hatched? What will you do if the tobacco settlement does not go through?**

A. First, the initiative is paid for in a number of ways -- only one part comes from tobacco revenues. Second, and more important, we believe that a national tobacco settlement will pass. I support strong tobacco legislation, and many Republicans and Democrats alike are working vigorously to craft comprehensive legislation. Of course, no offset proposed in a budget is guaranteed; the Congress can reject any proposed way of financing a program. If Congress does not pass comprehensive tobacco legislation, we will work with Congress to find other offsets. This is a high Administration priority, and we will find an effective funding mechanism.

**Q. Some Republicans are proposing alternatives to your child care proposal to target resources to help stay-at-home parents. Senator Craig, for instance, proposes to lower the tax burden on families in which one parent stays home through "income splitting" -- allowing a spouse to claim half of his or her spouse's income as their own. Do you support this?**

A. I believe that we should respect and support parents in whatever choices they make, whether to work or to stay at home. And I have tried to support that choice through a variety of actions to increase family income, such as expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit, increasing the minimum wage, and passing the \$500 per-child tax credit. My Administration has looked at ways through the tax code to promote choice and enable more parents to stay at home with their children. So far, we have found those options to be prohibitively expensive in the context of a balanced budget. In fact, the "income splitting" option that Senator Craig suggested has been estimated by the Congressional Budget Office to cost about \$25 billion each year, nearly six times the cost of my entire child care package. I do, however, believe that these are important issues to consider, and am looking forward to working with the Congress to explore ways to support parents and to improve child care in the coming year.

**Questions and Answers on Bilingual Education**  
**January 20, 1998**

**Background**

The Administration has strongly supported the federal bilingual education program, which permits a variety of different approaches to helping students master English, including both bilingual and English immersion instruction. We proposed a 27% increase in bilingual education for FY 98, protected it in the balanced budget agreement, and secured it in the House and Senate-passed appropriations bills. Our FY 99 budget will include another increase of over \$30 million for the bilingual program.

In June 1998, Californians are expected to face a ballot initiative to abolish bilingual instruction for public school children in the state, requiring that most instruction be conducted only in English. The idea has support from many conservatives and, polls indicate, many in the Latino community and other minority groups, who are frustrated with what they see as an ineffective approach to learning English. The California GOP endorsed the initiative at the end of September. However, the ballot initiative is vehemently opposed by many Latino leaders, who strongly support bilingual instruction and see the initiative as an attack cut from the same cloth as Propositions 187 and 209. The state's largest teacher organization recently has announced its opposition, as well. Meanwhile, Speaker Gingrich has recently called for an end to bilingual education.

**Q. What is your Administration's view of bilingual education?**

A. It is very important that all students become proficient in English. That is the language for success in school, and for success in life. New immigrants and other students whose native language is not English need extra help in order to learn to speak, read and write in English, and we should give them that help. The federal bilingual education program is designed to do that. The program permits a variety of different approaches to helping students master English, including both English immersion instruction.

**Q. Will the national tests be made available in bilingual versions?**

A. The purpose of our proposed national test is to test student proficiency in reading *in English*, not general reading comprehension. Therefore, there are no plans to develop a national reading test in other languages, although the National Assessment Governing Board will be making appropriate accommodations for students whose native language is not English.

By 4th grade, U.S. students need to have mastered basic English reading skills in order to begin to learn other subjects. I realize that there are students who have developed strong reading skills in their native language -- and that's great because those strong reading

skills will transfer over to another language. However, the purpose of the voluntary national tests is to encourage all students to meet the same high standards of reading in English -- so that is the skill that these tests will be designed to measure.

**Q. Does the Administration plan to intervene in California or campaign on behalf of bilingual education?**

A. We are gathering more information on the initiative as events develop. I don't think it would be appropriate for me to say more at this time, before the people of California have had any real opportunity to consider and debate the issue. My Administration does support the approach of the federal program, which permits a variety of different strategies for English language instruction.

**Questions and Answers on School Vouchers**  
**January 20, 1998**

**Q: When Congress returns later this month, Republicans are likely to continue their calls to support private school voucher programs as a solution for failing public schools. Why do you and most other Democrats continue to oppose private school vouchers?**

**A:** We need to focus on strengthening the public schools that serve nearly 90% of students and expanding choice within the public education system, such as through charter schools.

Vouchers would siphon critical dollars from neighborhood public schools that are already short on resources in order to send a few selected students to private schools. They would distract attention from the hard work of reform needed to change failing schools into good schools and good schools into outstanding schools.

As I made clear in Chicago recently, no child deserves to get a second class education. Where schools are failing, local and state education officials must step in and redesign them, or close them down and reopen them with new, more effective leadership and staff who will raise standards, put into place effective reforms, and create safe, disciplined learning environments where students can succeed.

**Q: Some argue that vouchers are vital to help children escape ineffective, dangerous schools. What is your response to that?**

**A:** My opposition to vouchers is based more on what happens to students who do not participate in a voucher program than on what may happen to the few who do. The fact is that 90% of our students attend public schools, and our primary responsibility, especially with limited federal resources, is to make sure that the public schools they attend are among the best in the world. This means concentrating our time and money on raising academic standards, improving teaching, providing schools with technology and other up-to-date learning tools, and creating charter schools and other forms of choice within the public school system. Vouchers only drain financial resources and energy away from our most important task -- improving our public schools.

**Questions and Answers on Voluntary National Tests**  
**January 20, 1998**

**Q: You spent much of 1997 fighting with Republicans over your proposal for Voluntary National Tests in reading and math. Republicans have signaled that they expect to continue their efforts to kill the tests in 1998, and many Democrats are sympathetic. Do you plan to continue to work for the national tests this year?**

**A:** Absolutely. High national standards and national tests in the basics are critical for our students, especially students in our poorest communities. There is nothing worse that we can do than allow the tyranny of low expectations to limit a child's future. We need to have rigorous expectations for students and then do everything we can to help them succeed. Last year we worked hard to reach a bipartisan agreement allowing the tests to move forward under an independent board, and I will work with Congress in a bipartisan fashion this year to ensure continued progress.

**Questions and Answers on Civil Rights Enforcement**  
**January 20, 1998**

**Q: What is in your new civil rights enforcement plan?**

**A:** I'm proposing a "reinvention" of the government's work in this area -- combined with an increase in resources -- to make sure our civil rights laws are enforced fairly and promptly. The plan puts new emphasis on non-litigation remedies and preventive measures -- increasing the opportunity for alternative dispute resolution (which is less costly and burdensome than litigation) when a complaint is brought and providing employers and others with the kind of technical assistance and advice that will prevent discrimination in the first place. We're also going to improve coordination among the government's civil rights offices, so they can share data and best practices and follow common strategies. At the same time, we are going to devote enough resources to these agencies to make these reforms really work to reduce discrimination. For instance, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission should be able to reduce the average time it takes to resolve a complaint from over 9 months to 6 months -- and reduce its current backlog from 64,000 cases to 28,000 --so that people will get their cases resolved more easily and quickly.

**Q. How does this plan relate to the President's Initiative on Race?**

**A.** We've had a strong commitment to the enforcement of civil rights laws throughout my Administration. But the Initiative on Race made this an especially appropriate year in which to propose systemic reforms to, and strengthening of, the nation's civil rights agencies and offices. And John Hope Franklin and the rest of the Race Initiative's Advisory Board made some specific suggestions to me in this area, which were very helpful.



**Questions & Answers On Campaign Finance Reform**  
**January 20, 1998**

**Q: It looks like both the House and Senate will consider campaign finance reform legislation next spring. What will you do to help pass the McCain-Feingold and Shays-Meehan bills?**

**A:** I am committed to the enactment of comprehensive, bipartisan campaign finance reform. I have been a long-time supporter of the McCain-Feingold and Shays-Meehan reform bills and I believe their legislation is our best hope for real reform this Congress. I will continue to speak out on the need to enact bipartisan legislation swiftly. I will also continue my own efforts to implement real campaign finance reform. Last year, I petitioned the Federal Elections Commission (FEC) to ban "soft money," I set up a commission to make recommendations on free and discounted broadcast time, and I asked the Justice Department to seek a case to overturn *Buckley v. Valeo*. Over the next few months my Administration will continue to aggressively push forward with these endeavors.

**Q: Are you only willing to support the bills sponsored by Senators McCain and Feingold and Representatives Shays and Meehan or are you willing to consider other types of reform legislation?**

**A:** Earlier this year I outlined five principles that form the foundation of acceptable campaign finance reform legislation:

- 1) It must be bipartisan;
- 2) It must be comprehensive;
- 3) It must reduce the amount of money that is raised and spent on federal elections;
- 4) It must help level the playing field between challengers and incumbents;
- 5) It cannot favor one party over the other.

I am willing to consider signing any reform legislation that meets these five criteria.

**Q: Senator McCain has suggested that in lieu of comprehensive campaign finance reform legislation, Congress should pass a ban on "soft money." Do you support Senator McCain's position?**

**A:** I believe a ban on "soft money" is an essential component of comprehensive campaign finance reform. That is why I petitioned the Federal Elections Commission (FEC) to ban "soft money" last year. While I believe we should continue to pursue comprehensive, bipartisan reform, I believe passage of legislation to ban "soft money" would be an

important step towards restoring faith in the political system.

**Q: Why not stop taking soft money?**

**A:** As I have said before, both parties raise large amounts of money -- the Republicans more than the Democrats. I will not ask the DNC to unilaterally disarm. The answer is for both parties to stop raising soft money -- voluntarily, as the DNC has challenged, or by law (either through the FEC or preferably by legislation).

Questions and Answers on Food Safety  
January 20, 1998

Tom - you need a sentence here saying what this money went for.

**Q: What steps is the Administration taking to improve food safety?**

**A:** Last year we were able to increase spending on food safety by approximately \$40 million. This year, our budget will seek an even more substantial increase in resources to improve food safety. The resources will go to a variety of initiatives, including: giving FDA authority to prevent the import of produce from countries without safety precautions equivalent to our own; hiring FDA inspectors to improve the safety of our nation's fruits and vegetables, both domestic and imported; developing new ways for federal inspectors to detect food-borne illnesses in meat and poultry and determine the source of contamination; improving educational outreach on proper food handling; and expanding [CDC's] surveillance activities for food-borne illnesses.

Tom -  
What does  
this mean?  
Please rephrase

**Q: Is this a new issue for the Administration?**

**A.** No, our actions are part of a continuing effort that has seen real accomplishment every year:

\* October, 1997. President announces new initiative to enhance FDA oversight over imported foods and to develop guidance on good agricultural and manufacturing practices for fruits and vegetables; to seek legislation to give FDA the same authority that USDA has to inspect imports; and to seek funds to greatly expand FDA's inspection force.

\* January, 1997. Administration announces comprehensive new initiative to improve the safety of nation's food supply detailing a \$43 million food safety program, including measures to improve surveillance, outbreak response, education, and research.

\* August, 1996. President signs Safe Drinking Water Act of 1996. The law requires drinking water systems to protect against dangerous contaminants like cryptosporidium, and gives people the right to know about contaminants in their tap water.

\* August, 1996. President signs Food Quality Protection Act of 1996, which streamlines regulation of pesticides by FDA and EPA and puts important new public-health protections in place, especially for children.

\* July, 1996. President Clinton announces new regulations that modernize the nation's meat and poultry inspection system for the first time in 90 years. New standards help prevent E.coli bacteria contamination in meat.

\* December, 1995. Administration issues new rules to ensure seafood safety. Utilizes HACCP regulatory programs to require food industries to design and implement preventive measures and increase the industries' responsibility for and control of their safety assurance actions.

\* 1994. CDC embarks on strategic program to detect, prevent, and control emerging infectious disease threats, some of which are food borne, making significant progress toward this goal in each successive year.

\* 1993. Vice-President's National Performance Review issues report recommending government and industry move toward a system of preventive controls.

Q. A recent story revealed that USDA did not close down a plant despite 1,700 violations. What are you doing to make sure our meat and poultry are safe to eat?

A. We ~~do need to keep doing a better job on~~ <sup>have to keep improving our</sup> food safety <sup>systems.</sup> And I am committing more resources than ever to the problem, and modernizing food safety for meat and fruits and vegetables and the water we drink. There are several important facts to remember in regard to this specific story. First, ~~in every instance cited in the story, inspectors took action to prevent unsafe food from reaching consumers and to correct unacceptable practices by the plant.~~ <sup>There</sup> Second, ~~the story is based largely on events in 1996. Since that time the Administration has developed the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), which we began implementing in January 1997. Under this system, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) can insist on preventative measures to improve food safety before a plant can reopen. Under HACCP inspectors will use non-compliance reports to document food safety violations. These actions will lay the groundwork for documenting repeated failures. And where there are repeat failures, FSIS can and will take formal action to shut down the plant. Finally, the Administration has asked Congress for additional enforcement authority to fine companies for violations of food safety standards. Currently, USDA can't fine companies that violate food safety standards.~~ <sup>occurred</sup> <sup>Tom - What in the world does this mean? see below - is that ok?</sup> <sup>if They</sup>

- be true my inspectors will

when there are repeat failures, and they will insist that the plant take a wide range of measures to prevent any future contamination before the plant can reopen.

although the inspectors did not close the plant - and in my view that was a wrong decision -- they did take actions to correct the plant's bad practices and to prevent unsafe food from reaching the public. (they found) an

Questions and Answers on Crime

January 20, 1998

Don - I think you need  
one more question - on  
what the POTUS thinks  
of the extraordinary rise  
in incarceration levels in this  
country. Thanks.

Crime: General

**Q: Mr. President, over the past few months you have taken a lot of credit for the falling crime rates. Do you really think it is fair for the federal government to claim credit for what is overwhelmingly a local issue? And don't changing demographics and the expanding economy have more to do with falling crime rates than your Administration's efforts?**

**A:** I think its appropriate for all of us --the federal government, police, prosecutors, and community leaders -- to claim some credit for driving down the crime rates to their lowest level in 25 years. Together, we fought for more police in our communities, fewer guns on our streets, tougher punishment for violent offenders, and better opportunities for our kids -- and used these tools to make a difference. Sure, our economic plan and other factors have played a role in cutting crime, but our tough, smart anti-crime strategy has definitely had an impact. For instance:

- We have helped to fund nearly 70,000 more police in thousands of cities across the country. Working with community residents, these new police have taken on all sorts of local crime problems -- but especially violent crime. There were nearly 5,000 fewer murders in 1996 than when I took office.
- We have kept guns out of the hands of criminals. An estimated 300,000 fugitives and felons have been stopped from purchasing guns. We have cut the number of legitimate federal guns dealers by more than two-thirds (from 252,799 to 88,590).
- We have enacted tougher penalties for violent and sex offenders; spent more than \$2 billion to help states incarcerate them; supported community notification of released sex offenders; and established a national sex predator registry.
- We have repeatedly put forth the largest anti-drug budgets ever. This month, we launched an unprecedented paid media campaign to make sure our kids are getting the message about the dangers of drugs. ~~Also recently~~, I signed a directive to help close the revolving door of crime and drug use.

And just recently

Over the coming year, my balanced budget will continue to build on these successful efforts. We will continue to work hand-in-hand with local communities on increasing public safety and reducing drug use.

Also, our top law enforcement priority will be to pass a juvenile crime bill that allows cities across the country to implement tough, smart strategies like the highly successful Boston model -- where no juvenile was killed with a gun for two and half years. Congress should finally pass a juvenile crime bill that provides more prosecutors and probation officers to crack down on gangs, guns and drugs. They should extend the Brady Bill to violent juveniles, and prohibit them from buying guns on their 21st birthday. And they should help principals keep more of our schools open later, so that adults can be more involved in the lives of our youth -- and teach them right from wrong.

### **Crime: Juvenile Crime**

**Q. What is your position on juvenile crime legislation under consideration by the Congress?**

**A.** I have made juvenile crime and gangs my top law enforcement priority over the next four years. My goal is to enact a juvenile crime bill that allows cities across the country to implement tough, smart strategies like the highly successful Boston model --where no juvenile was killed with a gun for two and half years.

America's Anti-Gang and Youth Violence Strategy must declare war on gangs; target funding for additional local prosecutors to pursue, prosecute, and punish gang members; extend the Brady Law so violent teen criminals will never have the right to purchase a gun; and target resources to keep schools open late, on weekends, and in the summer to keep young people off the street and out of trouble.

I opposed the juvenile crime legislation passed in the House last year because it didn't provide any of these necessary measures to give law enforcement, prosecutors, and parents the tools they need to combat gangs and youth violence in their communities. The Senate leadership has said that they plan to take up their own legislation in the early part of this year. We made some progress in the appropriations bill I signed last fall to start funding some new tools to combat juvenile crime. As for any comprehensive juvenile crime bill, I am committed to work with Congress to ensure passage of legislation that will give our children the safest and most secure future as possible.

**Drugs: Directive on Drugs in Prisons**

Q. A study was recently released by the Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse documenting significant problem of drug abuse <sup>among</sup> and individuals involved in the criminal justice system. Can you explain what you are doing about this problem?

A. Last week, I signed a directive to the Attorney General calling on her to take the necessary steps to:

(1) Require states to determine the level of drug use in their prisons and report annually on their progress. Under current law and federal guidelines, states are required to submit drug testing and intervention plans for their federal prison grant funding. My directive calls on the Attorney General to amend the guidelines to require states to also include a baseline report of their prison drug abuse problem, and to report every year thereafter to chart the progress they are making to reduce drug use and availability.

(2) Give states the flexibility to use their federal prison funds for drug detection, offender testing, and drug treatment. The Attorney General will draft and transmit to the Congress legislation to give states the flexibility to use their federal prison construction and substance abuse treatment funds for the full range of drug testing, sanctions, and treatment for offenders under criminal justice supervision. This will allow states to tap into the nearly \$8 billion in prison funds authorized by the 1994 Crime Law (about \$2 billion of which already have been appropriated to date).

(3) <sup>Require</sup> ~~Work with~~ states to enact stiffer penalties for drug trafficking into and within correctional facilities. Finally, my directive calls on the Attorney General to draft legislation, in consultation with the states, that would require states to enhance their penalties for drug trafficking into and within correctional facilities as a condition of receiving prison construction funds. The 1994 Omnibus Crime Bill contains tough penalties for similar crimes. I believe we must have "zero tolerance" for drug use and trafficking within our nation's prison system.

I also announced that <sup>my</sup> ~~his~~ FY 99 budget will include \$197 million for a series of initiatives to promote coerced abstinence and treatment in the criminal justice system.

**Drugs: Anti-Drug Media Campaign**

**Q. Can you tell us more about the national anti-drug media campaign?**

A. The number one priority in my National Drug Control Strategy is to motivate our kids to reject the use of illegal drugs. My Administration's Drug Strategy and Balanced Budget included substantial funds for an unprecedented \$195 million paid media campaign to teach our kids about the dangers of illegal drugs.

We've already launched the campaign in 9 of the cities of our 12-city pilot: the District of Columbia, San Diego, Baltimore, Boise, Milwaukee, Tucson, Sioux City, Houston, and Denver. Anti-drug advertisements are starting to air during prime-time network programming, with radio and Internet ads to follow. We will finish rolling out new anti-drug ads for the remaining pilot cities during the month of January, and we expect to have nationwide coverage later this year.



Questions and Answers on Health Care  
January 20, 1998

*Ask Chris whether he needs a  
1) a question specifically responding to  
today's Pear article; and  
2) any further questions on quality  
legislation (e.g., about  
its likely cost).*

**Q: How do you feel about the selection of Senator Breaux as the Chair of the Medicare Commission and Congressman Bill Thomas as the Administrative Chair?**

**A:** I believe that Senator Breaux is a fine choice to chair the Commission. His years of experience on the Finance and Aging Committees, as well as his strong track record of successful bipartisan negotiations on numerous policy fronts will serve the Commission and the nation well. I am also confident that Congressman Thomas will make significant contributions to the Commission in his capacity as administrative chair. As Chair of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health, he has demonstrated extraordinary leadership and an impressive knowledge about Medicare and the challenges it faces. I look forward to the Commission getting their important work underway.

**Q: Isn't your new Medicare buy-in policy just another example of a government take-over of the private health insurance system?**

**A:** Absolutely not. This is a carefully targeted proposal that is designed to make sure that older Americans have access to health care coverage. Currently, older Americans have less access to employer-based health insurance, are twice as likely to have health problems, and are at greater risk of losing coverage. Some have no insurance options, and others are left to buy into the individual insurance market, which can be prohibitively expensive because of their poorer health. This policy helps this vulnerable population get access to health care coverage by:

- **Enabling Americans Ages 62 to 65 Buy into the Medicare Program**, by paying a full premium.
- **Providing Vulnerable Displaced Workers over 55 Access to Medicare** by offering those who have involuntarily lost their jobs and their health care coverage a similar Medicare buy-in option.
- **Providing Americans Over 55 Whose Companies Reneged on Their Commitment to Provide Retiree Health Benefits A New Health Option**, by extending (COBRA) coverage until age 65.

**Q. Isn't this policy a Medicare entitlement expansion, at a time when Medicare can least afford it?**

A. Absolutely not. There is no impact on the Medicare Trust Fund because participants would pay their full premium over time, and any of the temporary costs associated with this proposal are completely offset by Medicare fraud, abuse and waste savings.

This Administration has made strengthening and preserving the Medicare Trust Fund a top priority since I took office. In 1993, we enacted a budget -- without the vote of a single Republican -- that extended the life of the Trust Fund through 2002. The Balanced Budget I signed into law last summer extended the life of the Trust Fund beyond 2010. This new policy is a carefully targeted policy that will in no way compromise our commitment to strengthen the Medicare program.

**Q. Shouldn't you wait for the Medicare Commission to make its recommendations before you propose such policies?**

A. The purpose of the Commission is to develop proposals for the overall financing of Medicare. Because this policy is fully financed, it has no overall impact on the Medicare Trust Fund, and will not conflict with the Commission's work in this area. The proposal addresses an important problem in our health care system without interfering in any way with the overall financing of Medicare, which the Commission is looking into.

**Q: Won't this policy cause people to retire early?**

~~No.~~  
A: ~~Suggestions that this would be a significant problem are simply untrue and are not backed up by the fact.~~ There is no financial incentive to retire since participants would pay a higher premium than they would in their current, subsidized employer health plans. And, since participants would have to pay the full premium, they may need to continue to work to afford the coverage. In fact, this option may actually encourage people to start second careers (e.g., opening their own stores; becoming a consultant) since they could purchase Medicare if they leave their current job.

**Q. Does this proposal create incentives for employers to drop retiree health coverage?**

A. For today's retirees, this proposal actually lessens the incentives for employers to drop their health coverage. Such employers would have to allow their retirees to buy into their current workforce's health plan if they break their promise of providing retiree health benefits.

**Q: What do you think of the Norwood/D'Amato consumer bill of rights legislation?**

**A:** I applaud Congressman Norwood and Senator D'Amato for their leadership on this issue. We are encouraged that so many Republicans and Democrats understand the need for national legislation. There are a number of bills on the Hill at this time. Some Members have indicated their interest in modifying their legislation before Congress comes back. We look forward to working with all Republicans and Democrats as we move forward throughout this process.

Questions and Answers on Abortion  
January 20, 1998

Q. According to a recent New York Times poll, the American public believes that legalized abortion should be harder to get and less readily chosen. Doesn't this poll indicate a slippage in support for abortion rights and your Administration's support of abortion?

A. As the New York Times story on the poll said itself, the public's attitude towards abortion lines up with my own view: abortion should be safe, legal and rare. As a nation, our goal should be to protect individual freedom while fostering responsible decision-making, an approach that seeks to protect the right to choose while reducing the number of abortions. I am proud of my Administration's efforts to prevent teen pregnancy, through our National Strategy to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and other efforts, and I am particularly encouraged that the rate of teen pregnancy has fallen to its lowest level in years.

According to the New York Times poll, Americans want to depoliticize the abortion issue. As we reach the 25th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, we should resolve to tone down the hot rhetoric and ideological battles that have surrounded this issue far too long.

Q. What do you think of the Republican National Committee's debate on the issue of refusing campaign funds to Republican candidates who support partial birth abortion?

This is a matter of internal politics within the Republican party and I don't think it is for me to comment on. Abortion is a very divisive issue and that is one of the more important reasons we should resist efforts to politicize it.

fostering responsible decisionmaking and

1/23/98

4

~~INTERF TWO QUESTIONS~~

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all

~~Q&A on Late-Term Abortion~~

**Question:** Will you sign the Partial Birth Abortion Act <sup>which</sup> ~~now that it~~ has passed both the House and Senate with overwhelming majorities?

①  
**Answer:** No, because I am still not convinced that this bill adequately protects women from grievous harm. I have said over and over that if Congress were to add a narrow exception covering the few cases where this procedure is needed to prevent women in dire circumstances from suffering serious injury, then I would gladly sign the bill. But until Congress does add that narrow exception, I will veto the bill -- no matter how many votes there are in favor it -- to protect the health of women.

~~**Question:** Why didn't the AMA's endorsement of the Partial Birth Abortion Act -- and its statement that the partial-birth procedure is not good medicine -- change your view of this legislation?~~

~~**Answer:** I looked at the AMA's letter, and it did not persuade me that this bill fully protects women from grievous injury. Let me remind you that the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, which is the organization of doctors that knows the most about this issue, opposes this bill for the same reason I do -- because it prevents doctors from using a procedure that in a small group of cases best protects women from serious physical injury. The AMA endorsed this bill after bargaining for a change that protects doctors. I've implored Congress to make a narrow change in the bill to protect women -- to ensure that they don't suffer grievous injury because Congress has tied the hands of their doctors -- and I will not sign the bill until I get it.~~

**Question:** Didn't you base your prior veto of the bill on false information -- i.e., that this procedure is performed only a few hundred times each year and only when women are in great danger?

②  
**Answer:** I vetoed the bill because there are a small group of women in desperate circumstances who need this procedure in order to save their lives or prevent serious injury to their health. Let's be clear: I've never said that these are the only circumstances in which the procedure is used; I've just said that these few women need to be protected. If Congress does so, I will gladly sign the bill, because I think this kind of procedure should be banned except when necessary to save the life of a woman or prevent serious harm to her health.

I think  
Questions and Answers on Tobacco Taxes and Budget  
January 20, 1998

-- on how much money the tobacco companies should pay and where it should go --

**Q. Are you concerned by comments by some members of Congress that tobacco legislation may be getting stalled -- that you may not be serious about getting a bill -- and suggesting that you should take a more active role in pushing legislation?**

**A.** I am committed to enacting comprehensive bipartisan tobacco legislation. So any comments to the contrary are just wrong. We are making very solid progress towards enacting comprehensive tobacco legislation that will reduce teen smoking. I've proposed a very clear set of principles about what should be in the bill -- the first issue being that this is about protecting kids, not money or political advantage. I've met personally with senior members involved in this issue -- I've assured them that we want to get this done, that we will. Our staff has met with members of both parties. My budget will contain some details on how we should get this done, but we will work with Congress in a bipartisan way. ~~Already there have been several bills introduced and I expect a few more will in the next couple of months and that is the natural way in Congress.~~ This has been a long battle we have been fighting and we will stay with it, and it will make a difference to the health of millions of children over the next few years. We have to get it done.

and will continue to do so. And

**Q. Do recent events, the tobacco settlement in Texas or the release of documents showing some companies were marketing to children, diminish the need for legislation or the chance that it would get passed?**

**A.** No. It is a good sign that <sup>further</sup> industry is being held accountable for the harms it has caused, and that we are getting information out about how the industry has hurt children. But that should serve as an impetus for comprehensive legislation. We need a comprehensive system of penalties to make sure companies reduce teen smoking, we need the FDA to have authority over tobacco products to protect our health, to make sure advertising doesn't go after our kids. So we need legislation, and it should be bi-partisan. I think all the attention from these events makes it clear why we need a national solution, and that we should try and get it done soon.

**Q. Your proposed budget call for a tax on tobacco products. How much money do you believe can be raised in this manner?**

**A.** I have urged Congress to pass comprehensive tobacco legislation to reduce teen smoking, and my proposed budget assumes some revenues from the passage of such legislation. It's very important to understand that these revenues need not come from a tax; they could result from industry payments and penalties pursuant to a settlement agreement. The revenues assumed in the budget will be consistent with my prior demand for a combination of industry payments and penalties to increase the price of cigarettes by up to \$1.50 over the next decade, as necessary to meet youth smoking reduction targets.

Q. Are the revenue estimates reported in *The Wall Street Journal* accurate -- i.e., that your budget assumes that tobacco payments will raise \$10 billion in FY 99 and \$40 to \$60 billion over five years?

A. I won't comment on particular budget numbers until we actually release the budget. The projected revenues we use in the budget will be consistent with what I have called for in the past: a combination of industry payments and penalties to increase the price of cigarettes by up to \$1.50 over the next decade, as necessary to meet youth smoking reduction targets.

Q. There are various reports about how much money from tobacco legislation will go to the states, and whether the federal government has any right to this money. What do you think the states are entitled to?

A. My first goal is to pass national tobacco legislation to reduce teen smoking. The specific allocation of monies is a secondary issue, which I will work to resolve with the states and Congress. Both the states and the Administration have worked hard to create the conditions for national legislation -- by bringing suit against the tobacco companies and by asserting regulatory power over them. I am confident we will be able to reach -- and to incorporate in legislation -- a mutually agreeable approach to the allocation issue that fully recognizes the states' contribution.

the states

the federal government

**Tobacco Questions**  
1/16/98

~~Question: What is the Administration's view of the settlement announced today between Texas and the tobacco industry?~~

~~We are very pleased with today's news. It is another indication that the tobacco industry will be held accountable for the harms it has caused. And it should serve as an impetus for the passage of national tobacco legislation.~~

**Question: Why is national legislation necessary if each state can settle with the tobacco companies?**

First, it's unlikely that each state will be able to settle with the industry, given the range of state laws on the subject. Second and more important, individual state settlements cannot accomplish important objectives relating to the public health, such as giving FDA authority over tobacco products, establishing a comprehensive scheme of penalties for failure to reduce youth smoking, and putting into place a nationwide licensing system for the distribution of tobacco products. Settlements can ensure that the tobacco companies pay out money for some of the harm they have caused. But we need national legislation to put in place the kind of comprehensive regulatory measures that will protect the public health and our nation's children.

**Question: Some Republicans have begun to talk about enacting tobacco legislation piecemeal, with legislation on youth smoking this year. Would the Administration go along with such a plan?**

We believe that Congress must enact comprehensive tobacco legislation this year. We will not be able to reduce youth smoking -- let alone meet our other public health objectives -- without a comprehensive measure. To reduce youth smoking over the long term, we must not only establish a system of penalties for failing to meet youth smoking targets, but also increase the price of cigarettes, guarantee FDA jurisdiction over tobacco, establish a licensing system, and regulate access and advertising. Those measures are also necessary to improve the health of adults. We shouldn't abandon the effort to enact comprehensive legislation before we've even started.

**Question: Will the President reject tobacco legislation that includes limits on liability, given the new RJ Reynolds documents?**

The new documents are horrific, but they only confirm what we've long suspected, while making the need for legislation in this area more clear than ever. Comprehensive legislation stands a far better chance of reducing youth smoking and protecting the public health than lawsuits brought by smokers against the tobacco industry. The President will focus on the legislation as a whole

Add  
to  
other  
tobacco  
questions



and ask whether it will reduce youth smoking and protect the public health. If it meets those objectives, he will sign it. As we've said before, limits on liability are not necessarily a dealbreaker; they should be weighed against, and viewed in light of, the public health elements of the legislation.

Of course, no one is talking about immunity from criminal prosecution: if tobacco industry officials committed perjury, lied to Congress, or committed other crimes, they will be prosecuted. The limits on liability contained in the AGs' proposed settlement applied only to civil suits -- capping liability for civil damages at \$5 billion each year.

**Question: Lawyers in both Texas and Florida have asked for obscene amounts of money for their role in bringing about settlements with the tobacco industry. Will the President support a provision in national legislation to limit fees for lawyers?**

The President is primarily concerned with ensuring that tobacco legislation reduces youth smoking and protects the public health -- not with collecting and distributing money from a settlement. The lawyers who brought these suits have expended lots of time and effort, and deserve to be well recompensed for their work. But everyone agrees that fees shouldn't be wildly out of proportion to the work that was done.

**Questions and Answers on Welfare Reform and Jobs**  
**January 20, 1998**

**Q: Even with the good economy, some people are concerned that there won't be enough jobs for all the welfare recipients who need work. Are you concerned about this issue?**

**A:** Right now, the nation's jobless rate is at its lowest level in a generation. We've created more than 14 million jobs since I took office. Nationally, we are creating enough jobs for individuals leaving welfare -- for example, the economy created 370,000 new jobs in December, far more than the roughly 60,000 adults who leave welfare each month.

But to make sure there will be enough jobs in every area of the country, I fought for and won a \$3 billion welfare-to-work fund in the Balanced Budget Act targeted specifically to high unemployment and high poverty areas where jobs may be scarce. I have also challenged companies all across the nation to hire welfare recipients -- over 2,500 have agreed so far -- and have committed the federal government to hire its fair share of workers from the welfare rolls.

**Background:**

On January 9th, the Labor Department released data showing that the number of jobs increased by 370,000 in December and that the unemployment rate stood at 4.7 percent. Since August 1996, about 180,000 people have left the welfare rolls each month, about 60,000 of whom are adults (the rest are the children in those families). Since you took office, the economy has created 14.3 million new jobs, and nearly 1.2 million adults have left the welfare rolls (for a total caseload decline of 3.8 million persons, both adults and children, or 27 percent). (These figures are from January 1993 through July 1997; we are holding newer numbers for you to announce in the State of the Union.)

**Q: You've said "We know now that welfare reform works." Can you tell us why you say so? Although the welfare rolls have gone down, isn't that due to the economy and harsh new rules like time limits?**

**A:** Welfare caseloads are the best measure we have right now of the success of welfare reform. As I announced in November, there are 3.8 million fewer people on welfare than when I took office and began to grant welfare reform waivers to 43 states, and 1.9 million fewer welfare recipients than when I made welfare reform the law of the land.

*--- these are*

I asked my Council of Economic Advisors to look at the role of the economy in reducing the welfare rolls, and they attributed about 40 percent of the decline to the strong economic growth, about one-third to the welfare reform waivers we granted, and the rest to other factors -- such as our decisions to increase the Earned Income Tax Credit, strengthen child support enforcement, and increase funding for child care.

Not enough time has passed for full scale research studies to be completed to tell us what recipients are doing once they leave the rolls, but we do know that almost all have left the rolls voluntarily, since very few time limits of any kind have gone into effect yet. Preliminary studies show that most people are leaving welfare for work, and I think even welfare reform critics have been pleasantly surprised by the progress so far.

Q: There's been some reports of growing lines at food pantries and homeless shelters. Do you think this is due to welfare reform? *Republican*

A: *Of course, I fought against attempts to cut welfare reform as an executive cut. I fought during welfare reform to ensure that families with children would still be entitled to food stamps and school lunches, in spite of efforts by Congressional Republicans to block grant these programs. I opposed the budget cuts attached to the welfare bill which had nothing to do with moving people from welfare to work, and was able through the Balanced Budget Act to restore \$1.5 billion in food stamps and \$12 billion in SSI and Medicaid for legal immigrants.*

We are always concerned about any report that hunger may be increasing, and will continue to monitor the situation closely. I do believe that this Administration's economic policies -- which produced an unemployment rate at its lowest level in a generation and reduced the poverty rate from 15.1 percent in 1993 to 13.7 percent in 1996 -- have gone a long way to help American families make ends meet.

Background:

A U.S. Conference of Mayors survey released in December found requests for emergency food assistance had increased by 16% in the year ending October 31, 1997. The cities responding to the survey said that the main causes were low-paying jobs, unemployment and other employment-related problems, and food stamp cuts. Because the survey was based on self-reported data from a non-representative sample of cities, we do not know how accurate it is. However, your budget will include an additional \$2.7 billion to restore food stamps to all legal immigrant families with children, elderly and disabled immigrants who entered the U.S. before August 1996, and certain refugees, asylees, and special immigrant groups (e.g. the Hmong).

~~Do the extent benefit cuts have led to some increases~~

~~in use of food pantries~~

~~Of course~~

~~We limited them~~  
and I ~~made sure~~ worked hard to restore funds for food stamps, as well as for SSI and Medicaid, in The Balanced Budget Agreement. We'll continue to work to restore food stamps, ~~but~~ because I believe that cuts in that program ~~can~~ not have anything to do with the real objective of welfare reform, which is to move people into good jobs.

**Questions and Answers on Bilingual Education**  
**January 20, 1998**

**Background**

The Administration has strongly supported the federal bilingual education program, which permits a variety of different approaches to helping students master English, including both bilingual and English immersion instruction. We proposed a 27% increase in bilingual education for FY 98, protected it in the balanced budget agreement, and secured it in the House and Senate-passed appropriations bills. Our FY 99 budget will include another increase of over \$30 million for the bilingual program.

In June 1998, Californians are expected to face a ballot initiative to abolish bilingual instruction for public school children in the state, requiring that most instruction be conducted only in English. The idea has support from many conservatives and, polls indicate, many in the Latino community and other minority groups, who are frustrated with what they see as an ineffective approach to learning English. The California GOP endorsed the initiative at the end of September. However, the ballot initiative is vehemently opposed by many Latino leaders, who strongly support bilingual instruction and see the initiative as an attack cut from the same cloth as Propositions 187 and 209. The state's largest teacher organization recently has announced its opposition, as well. Meanwhile, Speaker Gingrich has recently called for an end to bilingual education.

**Q. What is your Administration's view of bilingual education?**

A. It is very important that all students become proficient in English. That is the language for success in school, and for success in life. New immigrants and other students whose native language is not English need extra help in order to learn to speak, read and write in English, and we should give them that help. The federal bilingual education program is designed to <sup>do</sup> exactly that. The program permits a variety of different approaches to helping students master English, including ~~both bilingual and~~ English immersion instruction. ~~To help ensure that resources are available to assist children to learn English well, we proposed a 27% increase in the program last year and successfully protected bilingual education in the budget and spending bill before the U.S. Congress.~~

**Q. Will the national tests be made available in bilingual versions?**

A. <sup>The purpose of our proposed national reading test</sup>  
~~The voluntary national tests consist of a 4th grade test of reading in English and an 8th grade test of mathematics. We have proposed a bilingual (Spanish and English) version of the 8th grade math test because that test is designed to measure mathematics, not language skills. However, the purpose of the 4th grade test is to test student proficiency in reading in English, not general reading comprehension. Therefore, there are no plans to develop a national reading test in other languages, although the National Assessment~~

Governing Board will be making appropriate accommodations for students whose native language is not English.

By 4th grade, U.S. students need to have mastered basic English reading skills in order to begin to learn other subjects. I realize that there are students who have developed strong reading skills in their native language -- and that's great because those strong reading skills will transfer over to another language. However, the purpose of the voluntary national tests is to encourage all students to meet the same high standards of reading in English -- so that is the skill that these tests will be designed to measure.

**Q. Does the Administration plan to intervene in California or campaign on behalf of bilingual education?**

A. We are gathering more information on the initiative as events develop. ~~However, the~~ Administration ~~supports~~ the approach of the federal program, which permits a variety of different strategies for English language instruction.

does

I don't think it would be appropriate for me to say more at this time, before the people of California have had ~~an~~ any real opportunity to consider and debate the issue. My

**Questions and Answers on School Vouchers**  
**January 20, 1998**

**Q: When Congress returns later this month, Republicans are likely to continue their calls to support private school voucher programs as a solution for failing public schools. Why do you and most other Democrats continue to oppose private school vouchers?**

**A: ~~I strongly oppose any legislation allowing the use of federal taxpayer funds for vouchers.~~**

We need to focus on strengthening the public schools that serve nearly 90% of students and expanding choice within the public education system, such as through charter schools.

Vouchers would siphon critical dollars from neighborhood public schools that are already short on resources in order to send a few selected students to private schools, <sup>They</sup> and would distract attention from the hard work of reform needed to change failing schools into good schools and good schools into outstanding schools.

As I made clear in Chicago recently, no child deserves to get a second class education. Where schools are failing, local and state education officials must step in and redesign them, or close them down and reopen them ~~it~~ with new, more effective leadership and staff who will raise standards, put into place effective reforms, and create safe, disciplined learning environments where students can succeed.

**Q: Some argue that vouchers are vital to help children escape ineffective, dangerous schools. What is your response to that?**

**A:** My opposition to vouchers is based more on what happens to students who do not participate in a voucher program than on what may happen to the few who do. The fact is that 90% of our students attend public schools, and our primary responsibility, especially with limited federal resources, is to make sure that the public schools they attend are among the best in the world. This means concentrating our time and money on raising academic standards, improving teaching, providing schools with technology and other up-to-date learning tools, and creating charter schools and other forms of choice within the public school system. Vouchers only drain financial resources and energy away from our most important task -- improving our public schools.

**Questions and Answers on Voluntary National Tests**  
**January 20, 1998**

**Q: You spent much of 1997 fighting with Republicans over your proposal for Voluntary National Tests in reading and math. Republicans have signaled that they expect to continue their efforts to kill the tests in 1998, and many Democrats are sympathetic. Do you plan to continue to work for the national tests this year?**

A: Absolutely. High national standards and national tests in the basics are critical for our students, especially students in our poorest communities. There is nothing worse that we can do than allow the tyranny of low expectations to limit a child's future. We need to have rigorous expectations for students and then do everything we can to help them succeed. Last year we worked hard to reach a bipartisan agreement allowing the tests to move forward under an independent board, and I will work with Congress in a bipartisan fashion this year to insure continued progress.

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~~resources~~ and a "reinvention" of the government's work in this area -- combined with an increase in resources --

**Questions and Answers on Civil Rights Enforcement**  
January 20, 1998

**Q: What is in your new civil rights enforcement plan?**

**A:** I'm proposing an ~~increase in my budget~~ <sup>The</sup> to make sure our civil rights laws are enforced fairly and promptly. ~~And the plan puts new emphasis on preventive measures and non-litigation strategies -- increasing the opportunity for alternative dispute resolution and education while also strengthening the ability of federal agencies to enforce existing civil rights laws. We are going to make reforms and give enough resources -- about a 16% increase -- to make sure our laws against discrimination really work. The combination of new resources and reforms will have real effects.~~ For instance, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission should be able to reduce the average time it takes to resolve a complaint from over 9 months to 6 months so people are going to get these cases resolved more easily and quickly.

non-litigation remedies and

**Q: How does this ~~budget~~ <sup>Plan</sup> relate to the President's Initiative on Race?**

**A:** We've had a strong commitment to the enforcement of civil rights laws. John Hope Franklin and the rest of the Race Initiative's Advisory Board have urged us to ~~look at the budget and urged some specific reforms. And I am proud of my record on civil rights, but the Initiative on Race made this an especially appropriate year in which to propose systemic reforms to, and strengthening of, the nation's civil rights agencies and offices.~~ <sup>throughout my Administration.</sup>

that will ~~their~~ <sup>and reduce its current backlog from 61,000 cases to 28,000 --</sup>

<sup>But</sup> And John Hope Franklin and the ~~rest~~ <sup>rest</sup> of the Race Initiative's Advisory Board made some specific suggestions to me in this area, which were very helpful.

(which is less costly and burdensome than litigation)  
~~advice~~ as when a complaint is brought and providing employers and others with the kind of technical assistance and advice that will ~~prevent~~ <sup>prevent</sup> discrimination in the first place. We're also going to improve coordination among the government's civil rights offices, so they can share data and best practices and follow common strategies. At the same time, we are going to devote enough resources to these agencies to make them really work to reduce discrimination.



**Questions & Answers On Campaign Finance Reform**  
**January 20, 1998**

**Q: It looks like both the House and Senate will consider campaign finance reform legislation next spring. What will you do to help pass the McCain-Feingold and Shays-Meehan bills?**

**A:** I ~~remain~~<sup>am</sup> committed to the enactment of comprehensive, bipartisan campaign finance reform. I have been a long-time supporter of the McCain-Feingold and Shays-Meehan reform bills and I believe their legislation is our best hope for real reform this Congress. ~~As I have since my State of the Union,~~ I will continue to speak out on the need to enact bipartisan legislation swiftly. I will also continue my own efforts to implement real campaign finance reform. ~~Since the beginning of the year,~~ I ~~have~~<sup>last year,</sup> petitioned the Federal Elections Commission (FEC) to ban "soft money," I ~~have~~ set up a commission to make recommendations on free and discounted broadcast time, and I ~~have~~ asked the Justice Department to seek a case to overturn Buckley v. Valeo. Over the next few months my Administration will continue to aggressively push forward with these endeavors.

**Q: Are you only willing to support the bills sponsored by Senators McCain and Feingold and Representatives Shays and Meehan or are you willing to consider other types of reform legislation?**

**A:** Earlier this year I outlined five principles that form the foundation of acceptable campaign finance reform legislation:

- 1) It must be bipartisan;
- 2) It must be comprehensive;
- 3) It must reduce the amount of money that is raised and spent on federal elections;
- 4) It must help level the playing field between challengers and incumbents;
- 5) It cannot favor one party over the other.

I am willing to consider signing any reform legislation that meets these five criteria.

**Q: Senator McCain has suggested that in lieu of comprehensive campaign finance reform legislation, ~~that the~~ Congress should pass a ban on "soft money." Do you support Senator McCain's position?**

**A:** I believe a ban on "soft money" is an essential component of comprehensive campaign finance reform. That is why I petitioned the Federal Elections Commission (FEC) to ban "soft money" ~~earlier this~~ year. While I believe we should continue to pursue comprehensive, bipartisan reform, I believe passage of legislation to ban "soft money"

last

would be an important step towards restoring faith in the political system.

**Q: Why not stop taking soft money?**

**A:** As I have said before, both parties raise <sup>large amounts</sup> ~~huge sums~~ of money -- the Republicans more than the Democrats. I will not ask the DNC to unilaterally disarm. The answer is for both parties to stop raising soft money -- voluntarily, as the DNC has challenged, or by law (either through the FEC or preferably by legislation).