

**NLWJC - Kagan**

**DPC - Box 036 - Folder 008**

**POTUS Press Conference -  
Q&A's 4/24/97**

DPC  
for 4/24

## CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE Q&As

**Question:** Does the President support the new children's health bill being introduced by a bipartisan group of Senators led by Senators Chafee and Rockefeller?

**Answer:** The President is extremely encouraged by the emergence of yet another bipartisan children's health care proposal. Making a significant Federal investment in children's health care continues to be a top priority for this Administration.

We are currently reviewing the details of the Chafee-Rockefeller bill. The President is extremely supportive of expanding health coverage to more children by building on the Medicaid program. The Chafee-Rockefeller bill offers matching rates for states which expand Medicaid coverage to children above the mandatory level.

Cosponsors are discussing this bill as a complement to the Hatch-Kennedy block grant proposal to address the pockets of uninsured children in the middle class. The President too, believes that a multi-tiered approach to expanding coverage may be the best way to more uninsured children.

We look forward to working with Chafee, Rockefeller and a host of other Democrats and Republicans on the Hill interested in this issue to ensure that any balanced budget deal includes a significant investment in children's health coverage.

**Background:** On Thursday, April 22, Senators Chafee and Rockefeller are introducing a bipartisan children's health coverage bill which offers states higher Medicaid matching rates if they expand coverage to children above the mandatory levels. This expansion is contingent on states' choosing to extend 12 month continuous coverage to all children.

Cosponsors of this bill -- including Hatch, Kennedy, Chafee, Breaux, and Rockefeller -- believe that this bill could complement the Hatch-Kennedy bill which provides block grants to states to cover uninsured children. This potentially increases the investment in children's health to \$25-\$35 billion.

Some Republicans like the Chafee-Rockefeller option because it builds on the current Medicaid program, rather than starting a new program.

**Question:** Does the President support the Hatch-Kennedy children's health care bill which finances children's health care expansions by increasing the tobacco tax?

**Answer:** First of all, the President is delighted that there is so much bipartisan interest in expanding health coverage to children, and he will continue to work with Senators Hatch and Kennedy and others in Congress to pass a balanced budget this year that extends health care coverage to more uninsured children.

While the Hatch-Kennedy bill pays for new expansions by increasing the tobacco tax, the President has a proposal which would expand coverage to millions of additional children and that is paid for in the context of his balanced budget plan. Regardless of the source of financing, assuring a significant commitment for children's health care will continue to be a top priority for the President.

**Question:** Didn't the President propose to increase tobacco taxes in his own health care reform bill?

**Answer:** Yes. However, the President's current proposal illustrates how children's health coverage can be financed without this mechanism. Again, regardless of the source of financing, children's health coverage is a top priority for the President. We can no longer tolerate a nation that has 10 million uninsured children. As we develop bipartisan legislation to address this unacceptable problem, we must assume a certain financing source that helps pay for children's health insurance.

**Question:** Many Congressional Republicans say they are opposed to new entitlements. How are you going to convince them to expand health care coverage?

**Answer:** The President's children's health proposal is not a new entitlement. Rather, it is a capped program which gives states the flexibility to design innovative ways to extend health care coverage to uninsured children. This carefully targeted investment has been fully paid for in the President's balanced budget. Moreover, we have seen enormous interest from both Republicans and Democrats in expanding health care for children, and we are optimistic that we will be able to pass a children's health bill this year.

**Question:** **Couldn't you reach these children more effectively through an existing mechanism such as the Medicaid program, the tax code, or an existing discretionary program?**

**Answer:** The President wants to pass bipartisan legislation that will extend health care coverage to up to five million uninsured children. He is willing to consider any ideas that will enable us to reach this goal.

**Question:** **The Hatch-Kennedy children's health coverage bill seems to be losing support even by some of its cosponsors because of the tobacco tax financing. Are you concerned about these recent developments?**

**Answer:** No piece of legislation in this town experiences smooth sailing through the legislative process. The President continues to be very encouraged by the strong bipartisan support for an investment in children's health coverage. In addition to the Hatch-Kennedy bill, a number of others in Congress are coming forward with proposals to expand children's health insurance. For example, Nancy Johnson joined the list of Republicans who have put forth proposals to expand children's health care coverage. And we expect there will be many more. This should be a major priority for this Congress, and it is a top priority for the President.

## MEDICARE Q&As

**Question:** **Democrats are saying that the Administration has gone far enough with Medicare savings. Are you concerned that your base Democrats will withdraw their support?**

**Answer:** The President has put forth a strong Medicare proposal that extends the life of the Trust Fund to 2007 while modernizing and strengthening the program. The President has always been and always will be opposed to excessive Medicare cuts. He is working with the Democratic Leadership to ensure that any Medicare proposal is based on strong policy rationale and does not excessively or unfairly burden Medicare beneficiaries or the providers who serve them. Democrats have always been reasonable stewards of the Medicare trust fund, and the President is confident that there will be broad Democratic support for any necessary reforms of the program.

**Question:** **Do you plan to eliminate any of the new benefit improvements in your Medicare plan?**

**Answer:** While everything will clearly be "on the table" in our budget discussions, we are extremely sensitive about making any changes to the important beneficiary improvements in our Medicare plan. Over three quarters of Medicare beneficiaries earn less than \$25,000 per year. Improving benefits and fixing flaws in the program which place undue costs on this vulnerable population is a high priority for this Administration. For example, the President's budget expands coverage for mammographies and colorectal screening, improves self-management of diseases like diabetes, and extends respite benefits that are increasingly important to our older Americans. We look forward to continuing to work with both Republicans and Democrats in Congress on passing a balanced budget which will strengthen and improve the Medicare program.

**Question:** **Your proposal to lower out-of-pocket costs for outpatient department (OPD) services costs almost \$50 billion over ten years. How do you justify the costs of this proposal?**

**Answer:** **Our OPD policy simply returns the benefit to the original intent of the program.** This policy is in no way a new entitlement. Under current law, Medicare asks beneficiaries to pay 20 percent copayments for Medicare services. An anomaly in outpatient payment methodologies has allowed hospitals to indirectly cost shift to beneficiaries. As a result, beneficiary copayments are now averaging almost 50 percent. The President's proposal simply restores the copayment to 20 percent -- similar to all other Part B services.

**The current 50 percent coinsurance costs are significant for Medicare beneficiaries.** Over three quarters of Medicare beneficiaries earn less than \$25,000 per year. Those without Medigap insurance or other secondary insurance simply cannot afford the huge unexpected bills they receive for OPD services. Those with Medigap coverage have seen their premiums increase as a result of this anomaly. It is only fair that this benefit, like all other Part B services, have a 20 percent coinsurance.

**Question: Why are the costs in your OPD proposal backended. Aren't you just playing political games to balance the budget in 2002?**

**Answer:** We believe that it is important to address this unfair cost burden on beneficiaries. However, we are more than willing to discuss alternative ways to fix this problem.

**Question: The President's Medicare proposal contains mostly cuts on providers and managed care. Don't we need real structural Medicare reform?**

**Answer:** Absolutely. The President's budget takes important steps to modernize Medicare and bring it into the 21st century through a number of structural reforms including

- **Establishing new private plans** including Preferred Provider Organizations and Provider Sponsored Organizations -- available to seniors and people with disabilities.
- **Establishing market-oriented purchasing for Medicare** including the new prospective payment systems for home health care, nursing home care, and outpatient hospital services, as well as competitive bidding authority and the use of centers of excellence to improve quality and cut back on costs.
- **Adding new Medigap protections** making it possible for beneficiaries to switch back from a managed care plan to traditional Medicare without being underwritten by insurers for private supplemental insurance coverage. This should encourage more beneficiaries to opt for managed care because it addresses the fear that such a choice would lock them in forever.

**Question: Does the President support the Medicare Commission proposed by Senators Roth and Moynihan?**

- First, the President want to praise Chairman Roth and Ranking Member Moynihan for working together -- on a bipartisan basis -- to propose the creation of a commission to address the long-term financing issues that face Medicare. Their efforts reflect a bipartisan spirit which we believe is critical to ensure the success of any process designed to address this important issue.
- No one is more committed than the President is to seeking a bipartisan process to find long term solutions to Medicare. But my more immediate focus is reaching a bipartisan agreement on a balanced budget that extends the life of the Medicare Trust Fund in the near term. We have an historic opportunity to balance the budget. We should not let it pass.
- As the President has repeatedly said, we will need a bipartisan process to address the long-term financing issues facing Medicare, and he looks forward to working with both parties to develop the best possible process.

## MEDICAID Q&As

**Question:** **The Governors are joining advocates and providers in strongly opposing your per capita cap and significant savings in the Medicaid program. Aren't you concerned that support for your proposal seems to be waning?**

**Answer:** Both sides are taking consistent and expected positions in an important discussion about balancing the budget.

The Governors are not surprisingly taking the position that they would like maximum flexibility in administering their programs and would prefer not to have Federal budget constraints on the program if we are going to maintain the Medicaid's guarantee of coverage.

The President, for the third year in a row, is proposing significant flexibility provisions for the States. In return, he is also proposing that the Federal Treasury be protected against excessive cost increases in the future. This is not new.

The only thing that has changed is that the President's budget recognizes that growth in the Medicaid program has declined and as such will include much more modest savings than previous balanced budget initiatives.

The President will continue to work with the Governors to craft appropriate and much overdue flexibility provisions to enable us to not only constrain costs but hopefully to expand health insurance coverage.

**Question:** **The President is cutting \$15 billion from disproportionate share hospitals. Isn't that a bit excessive?**

**Answer:** According to the American Association of Public Hospitals, \$15 billion may be possible provided that our targeting policy ensures that DSH money is going to the hospitals that were intended under the statute. The Administration is working closely with governors, hospitals, and others to ensure that our DSH policy targets funding to hospitals that serve a disproportionate number of low-income and uninsured Americans. Moreover, the President's budget also makes important health investments so that the people who are showing up at these hospitals already have health care coverage.

**Question:** **Is it really worth cutting \$22 billion from Medicaid and implementing a per capita cap just to expand coverage to a few more children?**

**Answer:** First of all, the President has proposed \$7 billion in net savings in Medicaid, which represents a reduction of about 1% off of the current Medicaid baseline over the next five years. By definition then, the President's \$19 billion health care coverage investment could not be financed only through Medicaid savings.

Moreover, because a per capita cap assures states more dollars when they cover additional children and because children are relatively inexpensive to cover, we believe that this policy will provide States with positive incentives to extend health care coverage to more children. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that the assistance of a per capita cap would actually produce greater numbers of children covered under Medicaid than it otherwise would.

## QUALITY COMMISSION Q&As

**Question:** What will this commission hope to accomplish?

**Answer:** The President is calling on the commission to develop a “consumer bill of rights.” He wants it to particularly focus on consumer appeals and grievance rights. He has also asked the Commission to address other issues including assuring:

First, that health care professionals are free to provide the best medical advice possible;

Second, that their providers are not subject to inappropriate financial incentives to limit care;

Third, that our sickest and most vulnerable patients (frequently the elderly and people with disabilities) are receiving the best medical care for their unique needs;

Fourth, that consumers have access to simple and fair procedures for resolving health care coverage dispute plans;

And fifth, and perhaps the most important, that consumers have basic information on their rights and responsibilities, on the benefits plans offer, on how to access the care they need, and on the quality of their providers and their health plan.

**Question:** Will the patient bill of rights be mandated on states and private health plans?

**Answer:** No. The Commission will develop a model Bill of Rights that states, health care plans, health care providers, associations, and others can use to guide their own efforts. States have already been quite active in this area and the model should help them in future efforts. Many health plans and health care professionals have adopted a form of a bill of rights and this should assist them as well.

**Question:** Is this an “anti-managed care” commission?

**Answer:** Absolutely not. Quality and consumer rights are issues that transcend all models of care. We need to address those issues in a comprehensive manner so that no matter what kind of insurance plan Americans join, they will know that the care they receive is of the highest quality and that their rights as consumers are protected.

**Question:** **Won't the commission serve to delay quality legislative initiatives including those that even the President has advocated? Isn't the commission going to compete with these initiatives?**

**Answer:** This commission will complement, not compete with, legislation in the Congress that has broad-based support. The President will continue to support legislation in this area that has already received bipartisan support (e.g., barring gag rules, requiring 48-hour stays for women who have mastectomies). But this is just a start. We must go beyond these reforms to take a comprehensive look at the quality of care and how we can assure it. The Commission will work on building the consensus for more far-reaching reforms.

**Question:** **Doesn't this Commission just serve as a mechanism to implement more government regulation in our health care system?**

**Answer:** Not at all. The Commission has been given the charge of examining whether our rapidly changing health care system is still providing high quality care for all Americans and to ensure that consumers themselves have adequate grievances and appeals processes. Its focus is to help create consensus among the private and public sectors in how best to proceed. As such, its recommendations may or may not suggest additional Federal oversight activities, and it is just as likely as not that it will recommend no new major Federal role.

**Question:** **Doesn't this commission just a reward for campaign contributors and Washington-insiders who know little about what Americans in our health care system experience?**

**Answer:** Absolutely not. By any measure, these commission members are extremely well respected experts who have broad and different experiences in the health care system. They have expertise on a range of health care issues including the unique challenges facing rural and urban communities, children, women, older Americans, minorities, people with disabilities, mental illness and AIDS, as well as issues regarding privacy rights and ethics. They come from all parts of the country and reflect the diverse population in this country.

**Question:** **How much will this cost and who's paying for it?**

**Answer:** The Commission will cost an estimated \$1.8 million over the next year and be paid for by the Department of Health and Human Services. The members of the Commission will not be paid.

## GENERAL CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

**Question:** There are now 57 separate proposals for campaign finance reform. Isn't the legislation dead for this Congress?

**Answer:** As has often been said, in Congress there are 535 "experts" on campaign reform. That's certainly true. But there is only one broad-based proposal that is supported by Democrats and Republicans – the legislation introduced by McCain and Feingold and by Shays and Meehan. I think that when the matter is proposed to Members of Congress, and they are forced to vote yes or no on this legislation, they will have a very hard time explaining to their constituents why they voted no. As for people who say "there won't be reform this year" – on an issue like this, popular sentiment can crystallize very quickly. Legislation that didn't look like it had a chance of passing, a month later, can be on its way to the President's desk. That's what happened, for example, on the lobbying reform legislation and the gift ban in 1995.

**Question:** Some people say that the McCain-Feingold approach will require as much fundraising as today. Senators John Kerry, Paul Wellstone, and John Glenn have proposed legislation to provide complete public financing for congressional elections. If candidates accepted the public funding, they wouldn't be able to raise private money. What is your view of this approach?

**Answer:** I believe that the basic test for campaign finance reform must be that it be comprehensive, that it be fair to both parties, that it level the playing fields, and that it curb the amount of money in elections. I welcome any effort that works to build consensus toward these goals. I believe that McCain Feingold – which doesn't have public financing, but instead gives candidates free TV time provided by broadcasters – is the most realistic way to achieve these goals. Of course, Sens. Kerry, Wellstone and Glenn also support McCain Feingold.

As for public financing, my 1993 campaign finance reform legislation provided partial public financing for congressional candidates; and I think that states who are experimenting with public funding should be able to do so. But we have a rare chance to enact broad and bipartisan reform – reform that does not include public funding – and we can't lose sight of that mission.

## WELFARE REFORM LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

**Question:** More and more Republicans seem to be breaking ranks with their leadership to support some changes to the immigration parts of the welfare law. Do you think you have a chance in your negotiations with Congress to make real changes in this area?

**Answer:** I think that members of Congress and Governors and state legislators and county officials and mayors are gaining a new realization of the impact of some parts of the new law that I had a problem with from the beginning -- those parts not related to putting people to work. Many state and local officials are now looking more carefully at their budgets and the potential costs of assisting disabled legal immigrants, many in nursing homes, without federal help. We are now about 100 days away from August 1st, when many disabled individuals will lose their SSI and Medicaid benefits.

I think that, over time, more and more people will come to see the harm that these provisions could do and will support my proposal to provide medical and other vital assistance to legal immigrants who work hard, pay taxes and contribute to American society and fall on hard times through no fault of their own.

## FLORIDA LEGAL IMMIGRANTS LAWSUIT

**Question:** The state of Florida has sued the federal government to overturn the part of the welfare law that eliminates benefits for most legal immigrants. Governor Chiles says the welfare law will leave state and local governments in Florida holding the bag for billions of lost benefits. What is your position on this?

**Answer:** I believe legal immigrants who work hard, pay taxes and contribute to American society and fall on hard times through no fault of their own should get medical and other vital assistance when they need it. That's why my budget provides \$14.6 billion in assistance for those legal immigrants -- children and individuals with disabilities -- who, through no fault of their own, are unable to work.

As you indicated, the state of Florida filed a lawsuit Wednesday. The lawyers at the Department of Justice have just begun to look at it, and I do not have an indication from the Department about their plans. Generally, however, the role of the Department of Justice is to defend the constitutionality of federal laws when they are challenged in suits like this one.

## TEXAS WELFARE PLAN

**Question:** The Associated Press reported Tuesday that the "Texas Welfare Plan is stalled at the White House." Is it the usual procedure for you to personally consider state welfare reform requests?

**Answer:** The state of Texas is asking for far-reaching changes in Medicaid and Food Stamp laws which involve several agencies. The agencies are working as hard as they can to examine all of the relevant issues, and we hope to get the State of Texas an answer soon. The agencies have kept us informed of their decision making process -- as they should, given the significance of what Texas is requesting.

As you know, the Administration gets a lot of waiver requests from the states. The agencies conduct a review process for each of them. Because this is a complicated issue involving several different agencies, the review has been lengthy, probably a little more than we expected. But the agencies are working to provide Texas with a response as soon as possible.

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HIRING

**Question:** Earlier this month, you announced that the federal government plans to hire 10,000 welfare recipients. Do you think that federal hiring is the answer to welfare reform?

**Answer:** The federal government hiring initiative I announced April 10th is only one part of our larger strategy to make welfare reform a reality. First, I have been visiting state legislatures to share the country's best welfare to work practices and to encourage every state to rise to the challenge. Second, I have enlisted key members of the business community in this effort, soliciting pledges of help from major CEOs and working to build a larger network of business people who will hire welfare recipients. I plan to meet with a large group of corporate CEOs next month to discuss their specific commitments to make welfare reform a success. Third, I continue to reach out to nonprofits and the faith community, similarly urging them to meet his challenge and offering them information and expertise on how to do so.

Finally, I have proposed \$3.6 billion in my FY 1998 budget for several welfare to work initiatives including tax credits and other incentives for businesses that hire people off welfare; incentives for states and communities to create more jobs for welfare recipients; and transportation and child care to help people go to work.

## SERVICE SUMMIT

**Question:** What will the Summit accomplish?

**Answer:** The Summit is a great opportunity for all Americans to make a commitment to citizen service, and a chance for all sectors of our society to come together around what matters most -- our obligation to one another, especially our children.

Government has a critical role in solving our nation's problems and I am proud to lead the efforts of the federal government. But clearly we can accomplish more if all our citizens pull together to solve our problems. Already the Summit has prompted an outpouring of commitments by corporations and non-profits across the country to help in our mutual endeavor. And I know the organizers of the Summit are committed to making sure that all this good work doesn't end at the Summit, but that it continues in communities across our country.

**Question:** Isn't the Summit one big photo opportunity?

**Answer:** I think it's both exciting and tremendously encouraging that the Summit has captured the public imagination the way it has. Starting with the inspiration of the late Gov. George Romney, continuing with the enthusiastic support of all the former Presidents, and with the dynamic contributions of Gen. Colin Powell, this endeavor has really sparked the interest of the American people. The media, which is so often accused of cynicism, has responded so positively to this event. We would be foolish not to take advantage of this great opportunity to focus the attention of the American people on citizen service and the goals of the Summit.

In addition, the real work to be done at the Summit is probably the least glamorous part -- the work by the 140 communities attending the Summit. They are working on plans to bring the Summit's goals to life in their own communities.

**Question:** Isn't this Summit really the first round of the Presidential race in the year 2000, between Powell's involvement and reports that the White House insisted that the Summit drop Bill Bradley?

**Answer:** One of the things I like most about the way General Powell talks about this Summit is his emphasis that it's not bipartisan -- it's non-partisan. These themes of service and children transcend politics. That's why you see all the former Presidents coming together, people from all walks of life and political persuasion, agreeing that citizen action can make a difference.

**Question: Doesn't the Summit downplay the role of government in solving our problems, and argue that volunteers can do it alone?**

Answer: Government has a critical role in solving our nation's problems, and I am proud of what we have accomplished for this nation's young people, in education, health care, making our communities safer, and offering young people a chance to serve. But as I have said many times, the era of big government may be over, but the era of big challenges for our nation is not. Clearly we can accomplish more if all our citizens pull together to solve our problems. That's why it is so important for us to harness the power of citizen service to accomplish our goals. And it's the theory behind AmeriCorps, a program of which I am especially proud.

Members of my Cabinet along with other federal officials are attending the Summit to lend their expertise to this effort, along with scores of officials from state and local government. What you will see at the summit is communities, non-profits, corporations, government, and many others working side by side to solve problems.

I am also proud that federal agencies have made over 40 commitments to the Summit -- to tutor and mentor students, to create afterschool programs, and to create opportunities for young people to serve. For example, the Department of the Navy has committed to tutor or mentor 700,000 young people. Federal agencies have agreed to expand from 1,500 to 2,000 the number of schools they have adopted or have partnerships with.

**Question: Isn't the Summit an effort to paper over the government's withdrawal of assistance from needy children and families, exemplified by the new welfare law?**

Answer: I am proud to have signed the welfare law and given millions of families throughout this country a chance to move from welfare to work. Communities, governments, churches, business, and welfare recipients themselves are now working together to make this law a success. The Summit complements our efforts to create partnerships between government and the private and nonprofit sectors to accomplish our goals.

**Question: Doesn't the Summit reveal a rift between your approach of service and AmeriCorps and the volunteer approach championed by former President Bush through his Points of Light program?**

Answer: Voluntary action is a vibrant part of American landscape. It is something we should all take pride in. Showing that the service model and the voluntarism model actually work well together is what this Summit is all about.

**GUIDANCE FOR PRESS CONFERENCE**  
**April 24, 1997**

Service Summit	Tab A
<u>Counsel's Issues</u> Independent Counsel Starr Tobacco Litigation	Tab B
Politics	Tab C
Budget	Tab D
<u>Health Care</u> Children's Health Care Medicare Trust Fund	Tab E
Campaign Finance Reform	Tab F
<u>Welfare</u> Welfare Reform Legislative Proposals Florida Legal Immigrants Lawsuit Texas Welfare Plan Federal Government Hiring	Tab G
Tobacco (to be provided by DPC)	Tab H
<u>Japan</u> Absence of an Ambassador Northern Korean Acceptance of Four Party Talks Lack of Japanese Food Aid to North Korea Okinawa and U.S. Forces U.S.-Japan Alliance Directed Against China Market Access Hashimoto's Reform Program Coordinated Policy Japanese Resolution to Reduce Bases Peru Hostage Rescue	Tab I
Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)	Tab J

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Talking Points  
April 24, 1997

*Independent Counsel Starr*

Q: Yesterday Independent Counsel Starr requested a six month extension of the Whitewater Grand Jury. In his pleadings, Mr. Starr indicates that he is looking at a number of issues, including obstruction of justice. Are you concerned about these developments?

A: I am not concerned. I am not going to comment on the Independent Counsel's activities. I will say that I have answered all of Mr. Starr's questions, that other entities that have looked at this have found that we did nothing wrong, and that I hope this will get wrapped up soon.

Q: Mr. McDougal said on Larry King Live on Monday night that you lied when you denied having attended a meeting with David Hale and Mr. McDougal about the Susan McDougal loan. Who should the public believe in light of both Mr. Hale's and now Mr. McDougal's statements?

A: I have testified truthfully on these matters.

Q: Independent Counsel Starr also indicates that certain witnesses have asserted privileges which have obstructed their search for the truth. Have you personally, or has the White House, asserted any privileges to withhold information from Mr. Starr?

A: As you know, I'm not going to comment on Mr. Starr and his investigation other than to say Hillary and I have answered all of his questions.

*Tobacco Litigation*

Q: Today's New York Times questions Hugh Rodham's role in the tobacco settlement discussions. Have you discussed the settlement negotiations with your brother-in-law?

A: Hugh has been working for over a year on tobacco litigation issues. From time to time he has updated me on the status of the discussions. If a settlement among the parties is reached, I of course will evaluate it based upon what's in the public's interest.

Q: What has been the White House's role in the settlement negotiations, and in particular, what is Bruce Lindsey's role?

A: Bruce has had discussions with the various interests in the talks to ensure those matters about which we care -- namely, the FDA rules -- are protected. He has monitored the negotiations, but no one from the White House has attended any of the negotiation sessions. And, other than Hugh, I have not discussed this matter with any of the parties. [Check with POTUS].

## POLITICS

**Q:** The Democratic National Committee is \$15 million in debt. The committee is holding a major fundraising event next week but the proceeds from that event will not begin to put the Committee in the black. What is the future of the national Democratic Party? Will it be financially able to play a role in the 1997 and 1998 elections and beyond?

**A:** I believe in my party and I have made and will continue to make myself available to help raise funds for it. A Party's real strength is measured in the quality of its ideas and its candidates. By that standard, the Democratic Party is wealthy.

**Q:** Will you or do you support the Vice President for president in 2000?

**A:** The next election is too far away. We don't need to start that campaign today. But, as you know, the Vice President is an integral part of this team, and I can think of no one who would be better prepared or more capable of doing the job of President than Al Gore.

**Q:** Do you think the manner in which the Democratic National Committee engaged in fundraising and the allegations of improprieties have made Asian Americans feel under siege? Do you think it has increased the level of xenophobia in this country?

**A:** Many allegations have been made, some of them unfairly. Everyone --especially those in the Congress and in the media, because they have so much power --needs to be very careful when making allegations because they can potentially hurt an innocent person or group of people. Sometimes in the hurly burly of politics people forget that their words or their actions can have a huge impact on a person's life or the lives of an entire ethnic group.

## BUDGET

**Q: HAS THERE BEEN ANY PROGRESS ON THE BUDGET TALKS?**

**Q: ARE YOU CLOSE TO A DEAL?**

**A: I am encouraged by the progress that has been made and hopeful that we are going to reach a bipartisan budget agreement and it is important that we do so.**

- **The deficit has fallen dramatically from \$290 billion in 1992 to \$107 billion in 1996. It is time to finish the job. At the outset this year, I met the Republicans half-way on Medicare. I have put a detailed and serious balanced budget on the table.**

- **I then instructed my economic team to work with members of Congress in a cooperative spirit. Sensing an opportunity to move us forward, I invited Congressional budget leaders to the White House before my trip to Helsinki. Since then, budget talks have entered a new phase and I remain optimistic that an agreement can be reached.**

- **I am determined to reach a balanced budget agreement that can win the majority support of both parties in Congress and that is consistent with the priorities of the American people. A good agreement must include, at a *minimum*, that our children will have the best education from the first days of life through college to prepare for the 21st century; that more children will have access to quality health care; that our environment will be protected; that the most vulnerable among us will be protected; and that Medicare and Medicaid will be strengthened and modernized.**

**Q: IT HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT YOUR NEGOTIATORS AND THE REPUBLICAN NEGOTIATORS HAVE COME TO A TENTATIVE AGREEMENT THAT WOULD COMPRISE A NET TAX CUT OF AROUND \$80 BILLION AND MEDICARE SAVINGS OF AROUND \$110 TO \$120 BILLION. ARE THESE REPORTS ACCURATE?**

**A: We are in the middle of serious discussions on the best way to achieve a balanced budget that wins the support of a majority of both Democrats and Republicans. These discussions, I believe, have been going well and it would not serve this process very well to comment on specifics at this point**

**Q: WHAT IS YOUR REACTION TO THE LETTER SENT TO SEN. LOTT FROM A GROUP OF SENATE REPUBLICANS OUTLINING CERTAIN DEMANDS BEFORE ANY BUDGET DEAL CAN BE COMPLETED. DOES THIS HURT CHANCES FOR GETTING IT DONE?**

**A:**

**(1) As I have said before, we all need to be flexible and be willing to compromise.**

**(2) Each of us must be willing to compromise our sense of the perfect, to reach an agreement that advances the greater good. And we can do so without compromising our deeply-held values.**

**(3) It is critical that any budget deal contain important investments in our priorities, such as extending health care coverage to 5 million children, providing greater educational opportunity and protecting the environment.**

**(4) We can achieve a mainstream balanced budget agreement that garners the support of a majority of Democrats and Republicans as well as the overwhelming majority of the American people.**

## CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE Q&As

**Q: Does the President support the new children's health bill being introduced by a bipartisan group of Senators led by Senators Chafee and Rockefeller?**

**A: The President is extremely encouraged by the emergence of yet another bipartisan children's health care proposal. Making a significant Federal investment in children's health care continues to be a top priority for this Administration.**

We are currently reviewing the details of the Chafee-Rockefeller bill. The President is extremely supportive of expanding health coverage to more children by building on the Medicaid program. The Chafee-Rockefeller bill offers matching rates for states which expand Medicaid coverage to children above the mandatory level.

Cosponsors are discussing this bill as a complement to the Hatch-Kennedy block grant proposal to address the pockets of uninsured children in the middle class. The President too, believes that a multi-tiered approach to expanding coverage may be the best way to more uninsured children.

We look forward to working with Chafee, Rockefeller and a host of other Democrats and Republicans on the Hill interested in this issue to ensure that any balanced budget deal includes a significant investment in children's health coverage.

### **Background:**

On Thursday, April 22, Senators Chafee and Rockefeller are introducing a bipartisan children's health coverage bill which offers states higher Medicaid matching rates if they expand coverage to children above the mandatory levels. This expansion is contingent on states' choosing to extend 12 month continuous coverage to all children.

Cosponsors of this bill -- including Hatch, Kennedy, Chafee, Breaux, and Rockefeller -- believe that this bill could complement the Hatch-Kennedy bill which provides block grants to states to cover uninsured children. This potentially increases the investment in children's health to \$25-\$35 billion.

Some Republicans like the Chafee-Rockefeller option because it builds on the current Medicaid program, rather than starting a new program.

## MEDICARE TRUST FUND

**Q: Doesn't the Medicare Trust Fund Report just confirm that President has continually demagogued Medicare and failed to address the real needs of the program?**

**A: No.** The Medicare Trust Fund Report confirms what the President has continually stated -- that Republicans and Democrats have to come together to enact Medicare reforms to extend the life of the Trust Fund. The President has been addressing this important issue since he came into office.

His 1993 Economic Plan extended the life of the Trust Fund by three years. In 1994, the reforms included in the Health Security Act would have strengthened the Trust Fund by five years. In 1995 and 1996, the President proposed a Medicare plan that would have extended the life of the Trust Fund for at least a decade. And this year the President's balanced budget guarantees the life of the Trust Fund for at least a decade.

**Q: Should Medicare beneficiaries worry that the Medicare Trust Fund is in imminent danger?**

**A: This report should not be used irresponsibly.** The upcoming Trust Fund report should not be used to recklessly frighten the 38 million Medicare beneficiaries and their families into thinking that their benefits are in imminent danger. They simply are not.

**The need for responsible intervention to improve the Trust Fund is real.** The President has a proposal that addresses this need in a responsible way, without imposing devastating provider cuts, increasing beneficiary costs, or enacting structural changes that devastate the program and the people it serves.

**We have time to act this year.** Over \$120 billion remains in the Trust Fund (as of March 1997). While incoming revenues are somewhat less than outgoing payments, the current balance in the Trust Fund means that there is no danger that claims will not be paid.

The President believes that it is time to put partisan differences aside and agree on Medicare reforms that will save the Trust Fund.

## GENERAL CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

**Q:** There are now 57 separate proposals for campaign finance reform. Isn't the legislation dead for this Congress?

**A:** As has often been said, in Congress there are 535 "experts" on campaign reform. That's certainly true. But there is only one broad-based proposal that is supported by Democrats and Republicans – the legislation introduced by McCain and Feingold and by Shays and Meehan. I think that when the matter is proposed to Members of Congress, and they are forced to vote yes or no on this legislation, they will have a very hard time explaining to their constituents why they voted no. As for people who say "there won't be reform this year" – on an issue like this, popular sentiment can crystallize very quickly. Legislation that didn't look like it had a chance of passing, a month later, can be on its way to the President's desk. That's what happened, for example, on the lobbying reform legislation and the gift ban in 1995.

**Q:** Some people say that the McCain-Feingold approach will require as much fundraising as today. Senators John Kerry, Paul Wellstone, and John Glenn have proposed legislation to provide complete public financing for congressional elections. If candidates accepted the public funding, they wouldn't be able to raise private money. What is your view of this approach?

**A:** I believe that the basic test for campaign finance reform must be that it be comprehensive, that it be fair to both parties, that it level the playing fields, and that it curb the amount of money in elections. I welcome any effort that works to build consensus toward these goals. I believe that McCain Feingold – which doesn't have public financing, but instead gives candidates free TV time provided by broadcasters – is the most realistic way to achieve these goals. Of course, Sens. Kerry, Wellstone and Glenn also support McCain Feingold.

As for public financing, my 1993 campaign finance reform legislation provided partial public financing for congressional candidates; and I think that states who are experimenting with public funding should be able to do so. But we have a rare chance to enact broad and bipartisan reform – reform that does not include public funding – and we can't lose sight of that mission.

## WELFARE REFORM LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

**Q:** More and more Republicans seem to be breaking ranks with their leadership to support some changes to the immigration parts of the welfare law. Do you think you have a chance in your negotiations with Congress to make real changes in this area?

**A:** I think that members of Congress and Governors and state legislators and county officials and mayors are gaining a new realization of the impact of some parts of the new law that I had a problem with from the beginning -- those parts not related to putting people to work. Many state and local officials are now looking more carefully at their budgets and the potential costs of assisting disabled legal immigrants, many in nursing homes, without federal help. We are now about 100 days away from August 1st, when many disabled individuals will lose their SSI and Medicaid benefits.

I think that, over time, more and more people will come to see the harm that these provisions could do and will support my proposal to provide medical and other vital assistance to legal immigrants who work hard, pay taxes and contribute to American society and fall on hard times through no fault of their own.

## FLORIDA LEGAL IMMIGRANTS LAWSUIT

**Q:** The state of Florida has sued the federal government to overturn the part of the welfare law that eliminates benefits for most legal immigrants. Governor Chiles says the welfare law will leave state and local governments in Florida holding the bag for billions of lost benefits. What is your position on this?

**A:** I believe legal immigrants who work hard, pay taxes and contribute to American society and fall on hard times through no fault of their own should get medical and other vital assistance when they need it. That's why my budget provides \$14.6 billion in assistance for those legal immigrants -- children and individuals with disabilities -- who, through no fault of their own, are unable to work.

As you indicated, the state of Florida filed a lawsuit Wednesday. The lawyers at the Department of Justice have just begun to look at it, and I do not have an indication from the Department about their plans. Generally, however, the role of the Department of Justice is to defend the constitutionality of federal laws when they are challenged in suits like this one.

## TEXAS WELFARE PLAN

**Q:** The Associated Press reported Tuesday that the "Texas Welfare Plan is stalled at the White House." Is it the usual procedure for you to personally consider state welfare reform requests?

**A:** The state of Texas is asking for far-reaching changes in Medicaid and Food Stamp laws which involve several agencies. The agencies are working as hard as they can to examine all of the relevant issues, and we hope to get the State of Texas an answer soon. The agencies have kept us informed of their decision making process -- as they should, given the significance of what Texas is requesting.

As you know, the Administration gets a lot of waiver requests from the states. The agencies conduct a review process for each of them. Because this is a complicated issue involving several different agencies, the review has been lengthy, probably a little more than we expected. But the agencies are working to provide Texas with a response as soon as possible.

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HIRING

**Q:** Earlier this month, you announced that the federal government plans to hire 10,000 welfare recipients. Do you think that federal hiring is the answer to welfare reform?

**A:** The federal government hiring initiative I announced April 10th is only one part of our larger strategy to make welfare reform a reality. First, I have been visiting state legislatures to share the country's best welfare to work practices and to encourage every state to rise to the challenge. Second, I have enlisted key members of the business community in this effort, soliciting pledges of help from major CEOs and working to build a larger network of business people who will hire welfare recipients. I plan to meet with a large group of corporate CEOs next month to discuss their specific commitments to make welfare reform a success. Third, I continue to reach out to nonprofits and the faith community, similarly urging them to meet his challenge and offering them information and expertise on how to do so.

Finally, I have proposed \$3.6 billion in my FY 1998 budget for several welfare to work initiatives including tax credits and other incentives for businesses that hire people off welfare; incentives for states and communities to create more jobs for welfare recipients; and transportation and child care to help people go to work.

## Questions on Tobacco Settlement Talks

**Q. How does the judge's decision affect the Administration's interest in a settlement?**

**A.** I have no idea. Today, we should focus on this ruling. [Go to statement on ruling].

**Q. Isn't the Administration deeply involved in settlement talks?**

**A.** Like other parties interested in this issue, we have been monitoring the talks. We have a deep interest in protecting kids and the public health.

### *Follow-up*

**Q. But papers have reported that Bruce Lindsey is intimately involved in the settlement talks.**

**A.** My staff are staying informed of the talks, but we are not a party in the talks. My only interest is in protecting kids and the public health.

**Q: Would you support a settlement that gives tobacco companies immunity?**

**A:** I'm not in any position to judge any settlement. But, I'll say this: everybody agrees that blanket immunity is out of the question. As I've said, my only interest is in protecting kids and the public's health. We have to do right by them.

### *Follow-up*

**Q: Then, what form of immunity would you support?**

**A:** I'm not going to speculate on what the participants in the negotiations might agree to. My Administration proposed the toughest measures ever to protect children from tobacco, and I am going to fight to see that those restrictions take effect. I'm not going to agree to anything with respect to tobacco that jeopardizes the public health. Our focus will stay on protecting kids and the public health.

### *Follow-up*

**Q:** Anti-tobacco advocates -- including former FDA Commissioner David Kessler -- held a press conference yesterday saying immunity should be off the table altogether. Do you disagree?

**A:** I have tremendous respect for Dr. Kessler on this issue. Again, I'm not going to support anything that jeopardizes the public health.

## ABSENCE OF AN AMBASSADOR

**It's been four months since Ambassador Mondale left Tokyo. Aren't you concerned about leaving such an important post vacant?**

- Tokyo is an important post and that's why I want to take whatever time is needed to make sure we have the right person for the job. That said, I anticipate we will be moving forward on our nomination soon.
- In the interim, I have every confidence in our Charge who is doing a superb job.

## NORTH KOREAN ACCEPTANCE OF FOUR PARTY TALKS

**The North Korean news agency reported that North Korea has accepted in principle the Four Party Talks. Is that true?**

- The North Koreans told us two weeks ago in New York they were prepared to accept Four Party Talks "in principle". Unfortunately, they have not actually agreed to begin the talks.
- As you know, the North is experiencing a severe food shortage. We have responded to the UN World Food Program appeal by providing \$25 million worth of food which will be targeted at those most at risk -- children under six.
- We do not link our humanitarian assistance to our policy approach to North Korea. We urge North Korea to accept our proposal for peace talks without preconditions. I believe the four party peace talks is the best way to address the security concerns of all parties.

**LACK OF JAPANESE FOOD AID TO NORTH KOREA**

**Did you talk about the food shortage in North Korea? Did you try to persuade Prime Minister Hashimoto to contribute to the UN food appeal for North Korea?**

- We did discuss the situation in North Korea. We have consulted closely with Japan throughout our preparations for Four Party talks and throughout our own deliberations regarding North Korea's economic situation.
- Food assistance is not the long-term answer to the problems facing North Korea. Structural reform is needed. The best way to move toward structural reform is through the peace process.

## OKINAWA AND U.S. FORCES

### **Did the Prime Minister request a reduction of U.S. forces on Okinawa?**

- Last year in Tokyo, we issued a Joint Security Declaration which, among other things, acknowledged the security environment in the Asia-Pacific region and reaffirmed our need to maintain about 100,000 U.S. military personnel in the region.
- Today, the Prime Minister and I reviewed the security environment and renewed our commitments under the Joint Declaration to continue to closely consult on all aspects of our security relationship. We will continue to maintain our forces in Asia at or about the present level.

## U.S.-JAPAN ALLIANCE DIRECTED AGAINST CHINA

**Is the U.S.-Japan alliance intended as a counterweight to China?**

- The United States-Japan security alliance has maintained peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region for the last 50 years. It has been the foundation that enabled economic and democratic growth for most nations in the region.
- The alliance is not designed as a counterweight to China. We have a policy of engagement with China; the Chinese should see our security alliance with Japan for what it is: a foundation for stability in the Northern Pacific. I think we have done a good job in explaining to the Chinese the intent of our review of the Joint Guidelines for our Defense Cooperation.

## MARKET ACCESS

**Did you raise bilateral market access issues with the Prime Minister?**

- The Prime Minister explained to me the objectives of his deregulation and structural reform policies, and in that context we discussed market access.
- I'm proud of our record of achievement on market access; I believe the record proves that the agreements we have reached have been helped to create jobs and build prosperity in the United States and in Japan.

## HASHIMOTO'S REFORM PROGRAM

**Do you support Hashimoto's reform program?**

- I am pleased Prime Minister Hashimoto shares the objectives of promoting strong domestic demand-led growth and avoiding significant increases in Japan's current account surplus.
- I fully support his far-reaching deregulation and policies that will improve market access.
- I know how tough it is to implement reform, and the Prime Minister has undertaken to reform several sectors of Japan's economy, society and government at the same time. I wish him well.

**COORDINATED POLICY**

**Did you and Hashimoto agree to coordinate policy on China and North Korea?**

- Close consultation is the hallmark of our alliance. Regarding North Korea, Japan is a charter member of KEDO and is an important contributor to nuclear freeze under the Agreed Framework.
- We certainly consider Japan a valuable partner in our effort to maintain peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. As far as China is concerned, we both support engaging China to integrate it into the international system of rules and norms.

### JAPANESE RESOLUTION TO REDUCE BASES

**Earlier this week, the Japanese Lower House of the Diet passed a resolution calling for the consolidation, realignment, reduction and relocation of U.S. bases on Okinawa. Do you interpret this to mean the Japanese no longer want U.S. forces on Okinawa?**

- I view that particular resolution as a confirmation of the SACO process which will consolidate, realign, and relocate some of our bases.
- The language of the resolution was very similar to the language the Prime Minister and I used in our April 1996 Joint Security Declaration in Tokyo. *((If needed: I believe the resolution was designed to reassure the Okinawan people that our agreement to the SACO process was on track.))*

## PERU HOSTAGE RESCUE

### **What is your reaction to the hostage rescue in Lima, Peru?**

- We are relieved that this incident has ended and that 71 of the 72 hostages were released safely.
- Congratulate Peru for having brought to a close this reprehensible incident perpetuated by the MRTA. Support the GOP's refusal to make concessions.
- Prime Minister Hashimoto dealt patiently with this tense situation for nearly five months. He courageously refused to bend to the demands of the terrorists -- this was the right thing to do, for Japan, the hostages and for all of us who are committed to preventing the spread of terrorism.
- Ultimate responsibility for this terrible incident rests squarely with the MRTA hostage-takers.
- USG not notified in advance; respect need in a case like this, where no U.S. citizens involved, to preserve operational security.
- The US was not involved in the raid, provided no equipment, advice, or technical support.
- Prior to the hostage-taking, the US trained Peruvian police and military units in hostage rescue and other counter-terrorism topics. US for many years has provided training in counter-terrorism to Peruvian Police, as it does in many countries of the world. Cannot confirm, however, whether units involved in yesterday's action were US-trained.

## CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION (CWC)

If treaty passes:

**Q: How will ratification of the CWC strengthen the U.S. ability to fight terrorism?**

**A:** The CWC will increase the difficulty for terrorists and proliferators to acquire chemical weapons and significantly improve the ability of our law enforcement authorities to investigate and prosecute chemical terrorists even before chemical weapons are used. Japan serves as an example of the importance of this treaty and its implementing legislation in combating the terrorist threat. Within ten days of the poison gas attacks in the Tokyo subways, the Japanese enacted the CWC implementing legislation. The Japanese completed ratification of the CWC a month later.

**Q: What steps will the administration take to apply sanctions to treaty violators?**

**A:** If it is determined that a party to the Convention is in violation of the Convention and that the actions of such party threaten the national security interests of the United States, we will consult with, and promptly submit a report to the Senate detailing the effect of such actions on the Convention. We will also seek on an urgent basis a meeting at the highest diplomatic level with the Organization for the prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the noncompliant party. We will also work with the organization to restrict or suspend the noncompliant party's rights and privileges under the Convention until the party complies with the treaty.

**Q: What are the most critical benefits to be gained from ratification of the CWC?**

**A:** The Convention makes it less likely that our armed forces will ever again encounter chemical weapons on the battlefield; less likely that rogue states will have access to the materials needed to build chemical arms; and less likely that such arms will fall into the hands of terrorists or others hostile to our interests. The results will be a safer America and a safer world.

## CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION (CWC)

If it fails:

**Q: What are the consequences of failure of CWC to Americans' security?**

**A:** The United States must monitor and seek to control the spread of chemical weapons worldwide, with or without the CWC. If the Congress fails to act and bring the CWC and its domestic legislation into force, we will deny ourselves important tools to track and control the spread of these weapons globally, and to punish violators. By going it alone, we will deny ourselves access to additional information about rogue states and terrorist groups. We will sharply limit our ability to apply political, diplomatic, and economic pressure, as well as other penalties against violators of the Convention's ban on poison gas. By rejecting this international effort to ban chemical weapons, American troops and citizens alike will be less secure and more vulnerable to two of the most serious emerging threats in the post-cold war era, the spread of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism.

**Q: How will American business be affected by the failing of the CWC?**

**A:** The nation's largest exporter - the chemical industry - has said as much as \$600 million a year in U.S. sales will be placed at risk if the United States does not ratify the Convention. American businesses will face trade restrictions by the nations who are party to the treaty. Some treaty members have a history of denying the United States access to their home markets, and could use the Convention as an excuse to immediately suspend trade with the United States in treaty-controlled chemicals.

**Q: Will there be any damage to the American global leadership if the CWC fails?**

**A:** Yes, other countries, who look to the United States for leadership, would have to look elsewhere. Our ability to lead not only in this effort, but on a broad range of proliferation and terrorism challenges will be sharply undermined. If we reject a treaty which wouldn't have been concluded without our determined efforts, we will also find ourselves subject to the same trade sanctions and restrictions as rogue states such as Libya.

**Q: Will the United States lose its seat at the table for implementing the CWC?**

**A:** The United States will not be part of the governing body which oversees implementation, nor will U.S. citizens serve as international inspectors or in other key positions. Americans, with the most comprehensive experience in implementing and verifying international arms control agreements and with a large chemical industry, would not have an input on implementing the treaty's reporting and inspection protocols.

OK

## WELFARE REFORM LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

**Question:** More and more Republicans seem to be breaking ranks with their leadership to support some changes to the immigration parts of the welfare law. Do you think you have a chance in your negotiations with Congress to make real changes in this area?

**Answer:** I think that members of Congress and Governors and state legislators and county officials and mayors are gaining a new realization of the impact of some parts of the new law that I had a problem with from the beginning -- those parts not related to putting people to work. Many state and local officials are now looking more carefully at their budgets and the potential costs of assisting disabled legal immigrants, many in nursing homes, without federal help. We are now about 100 days away from August 1st, when many disabled individuals will lose their SSI and Medicaid benefits.

I think that, over time, more and more people will come to see the harm that these provisions could do and will support my proposal to provide medical and other vital assistance to legal immigrants who work hard, pay taxes and contribute to American society and fall on hard times through no fault of their own.

Laura -

Just a couple of changes in here. Make sure Julie Mason knows. There are only one new ones. The ones from last time should probably also be placed in the briefing book. (If she wants me to go over those to check if any are out-of-date, I'd be glad to.)

Elena

OK

## FLORIDA LEGAL IMMIGRANTS LAWSUIT

**Question:** The state of Florida has sued the federal government to overturn the part of the welfare law that eliminates benefits for most legal immigrants. Governor Chiles says the welfare law will leave state and local governments in Florida holding the bag for billions of lost benefits. What is your position on this?

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**Question:** **Some people say that the McCain-Feingold approach will require as much fundraising as today. Senators John Kerry, Paul Wellstone, and John Glenn have proposed legislation to provide complete public financing for congressional elections. If candidates accepted the public funding, they wouldn't be able to raise private money. What is your view of this approach?**

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## SERVICE SUMMIT

**Question:** What will the Summit accomplish?

**Answer:** The Summit is a great opportunity for all Americans to make a commitment to citizen service, and a chance for all sectors of our society to come together around what matters most -- our obligation to one another, especially our children.

Government has a critical role in solving our nation's problems and I am proud to lead the efforts of the federal government. But clearly we can accomplish more if all our citizens pull together to solve our problems. Already the Summit has prompted an outpouring of commitments by corporations and non-profits across the country to help in our mutual endeavor. And I know ~~General Powell is~~ committed to making sure that all this good work doesn't end at the Summit, but that it continues in communities across our country.

**Question:** Isn't the Summit one big photo opportunity?

**Answer:** I think it's both exciting and tremendously encouraging that the Summit has captured the public imagination the way it has. Starting with the inspiration of the late Gov. George Romney, continuing with the enthusiastic support of all the former Presidents, and with the dynamic contributions of Gen. Colin Powell, this endeavor has really sparked the interest of the American people. The media, which is so often accused of cynicism, has responded so positively to this event. We would be foolish not to take advantage of this great opportunity to focus the attention of the American people on citizen service and the goals of the Summit.

In addition, the real work to be done at the Summit is probably the least glamorous part -- the work by the 140 communities attending the Summit. They are working on plans to bring the Summit's goals to life in their own communities.

**Question:** Isn't this Summit really the first round of the Presidential race in the year 2000, between Powell's involvement and reports that the White House insisted that the Summit drop Bill Bradley?

**Answer:** One of the things I like most about the way General Powell talks about this Summit is his emphasis that it's not bipartisan -- it's non-partisan. These themes of service and children transcend politics. That's why you see all the former Presidents coming together, people from all walks of life and political persuasion, agreeing that citizen action can make a difference.

*the organizers of the summit are*

**Question: Doesn't the Summit downplay the role of government in solving our problems, and argue that volunteers can do it alone?**

Answer: Government has a critical role in solving our nation's problems, and I am proud of what we have accomplished for this nation's young people, in education, health care, making our communities safer, and offering young people a chance to serve. But as I have said many times, the era of big government may be over, but the era of big challenges for our nation is not. Clearly we can accomplish more if all our citizens pull together to solve our problems. That's why it is so important for us to harness the power of citizen service to accomplish our goals. And it's the theory behind AmeriCorps, a program of which I am especially proud.

Members of my Cabinet along with other federal officials are attending the Summit to lend their expertise to this effort, along with scores of officials from state and local government. What you will see at the summit is communities, non-profits, corporations, government, and many others working side by side to solve problems.

I am also proud that federal agencies have made over 40 commitments to the Summit -- to tutor and mentor students, to create afterschool programs, and to create opportunities for young people to serve. For example, the Department of the Navy has committed to tutor or mentor 700,000 young people. Federal agencies have agreed to expand from 1,500 to 2,000 the number of schools they have adopted or have partnerships with.

**Question: Isn't the Summit an effort to paper over the government's withdrawal of assistance from needy children and families, exemplified by the new welfare law?**

Answer: I am proud to have signed the welfare law and given millions of families throughout this country a chance to move from welfare to work. Communities, governments, churches, business, and welfare recipients themselves are now working together to make this law a success. The Summit complements our efforts to create partnerships between government and the private and nonprofit sectors to accomplish our goals.

**Question: Doesn't the Summit reveal a rift between your approach of service and AmeriCorps and the volunteer approach championed by former President Bush through his Points of Light program?**

Answer: Voluntary action is a vibrant part of American landscape. It is something we should all take pride in. Showing that the service model and the voluntarism model actually work well together is what this Summit is all about.