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Oct. 23, 1998 - DPC Weekly Report

4. Health Care -- AIDS/Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Event: Next Wednesday, at Rep. Waters's request, you will take part in an event with the CBC to celebrate the \$130 million budget increase targeted to HIV/AIDS for minorities. African-Americans represent 44 percent of all new HIV/AIDS cases. Securing new targeted funding for minorities through a range of programs -- including new investments in prevention, women and children, and substance abuse -- was the top priority for the CBC in the budget. They are thrilled they received their full request and greatly appreciate the Administration's efforts in fighting for these increases. They are also pleased that there were significant increases in funding for Ryan White, as well as a new commitment to pay for programs designed to reduce health care disparities among the minority populations.

5. Health Care -- Safeguarding Medicare Beneficiaries who Lose HMO Coverage: On Friday, HCFA released a letter to state insurance commissioners outlining the rights of Medicare beneficiaries who have been involuntarily terminated from Medicare HMOs to access supplemental "Medigap" insurance. The letter made clear that insurers must provide such beneficiaries access to certain Medigap plans now offered regardless of health status, prior claims history, or medical condition. Although the letter will be well received by the aging groups (such as AARP), two issues will attract dissatisfaction from the disability community. First, because of concerns about adverse selection, the law does not give us the authority to mandate that Medigap plans with prescription drug coverage be guaranteed issued. Second, under current law we do not have the authority to require insurers not now offering Medigap plans to disabled Medicare beneficiaries to do so. As a consequence, in the 35 states that do not mandate offering Medigap to the disabled, disabled beneficiaries who were dropped from HMOs will not have guaranteed access to affordable Medigap plans. However, the HCFA letter does urge states to pass legislation to require a Medigap offering to the disabled. Moreover, you have been on record since last year as supporting bipartisan legislation in the Congress to require all insurers offering Medigap plans to seniors to also offer such an option to the disabled population.

6. Drugs -- Medical Marijuana: ONDCP and the Justice Department have tentatively scheduled a press conference early next week in D.C., at which General McCaffrey and Attorney General Reno will call on voters to reject medical marijuana ballot initiatives pending in six states (AK, AZ, WA, OR, NV, CO) and the District of Columbia. McCaffrey will urge voters not to change drug laws until scientific facts can confirm that the benefits of marijuana outweigh the risks. ONDCP also hopes to release a letter signed by former Presidents Ford, Carter, and Bush opposing these ballot initiatives.

7. Crime -- Law Enforcement: Last week, just prior to adjourning, the Congress passed legislation to provide college scholarships to the dependents of slain state and local law enforcement officers. You called on Congress to enact such legislation at last year's NAPO Top Cops event. Two years ago in a Rose Garden ceremony, you signed similar legislation, which provides scholarships to the children and spouses of slain federal law enforcement officers.

8. Immigration -- Budget Victories: The budget bill contains several significant achievements for your immigration agenda. We asked for and received a \$171 million increase to address the two-year backlog of pending naturalization applications at the INS. With help from the Hispanic Caucus, labor unions, and religious groups, we were able to delete provisions that would have reduced job opportunities, wages, and work standards for legal U.S. farmworkers by creating a new agricultural guestworker program. Finally, we were able to grant amnesty -- automatic eligibility to adjust to permanent legal status -- to approximately 48,000 Haitians who were paroled into this country after the 1991 overthrow of President Aristide or who applied for asylum prior to 1996. You temporarily suspended deportation of these Haitians last December and called on Congress to grant them permanent relief.

9. Immigration/Welfare -- Public Charge: The Justice and State Departments have agreed to issue guidance instructing INS inspectors and State Department consular officers to disregard prior or current receipt of Medicaid, CHIP, and/or Food Stamps when determining whether an immigrant is likely to become a public charge (unless an alien has received institutionalized care funded by Medicaid). In recent months, there have been documented instances of aliens being denied re-entry to the U.S. because they had received Medicaid and of aliens being told by immigration officials that receipt of Medicaid or Food Stamps could negatively affect their immigration status. Our goal is to have the new guidance issued by November 1st, when provisions which restore Food Stamp benefits to 250,000 elderly, disabled, and other needy legal immigrants go into effect.

10. Civil Rights -- EEOC: Your FY 1999 budget included \$279 million -- a \$37 million increase over the previous year -- to expand EEOC's alternative dispute resolution program and reduce the backlog of private sector discrimination complaints. The final budget fully funds your request, providing the first real increase for EEOC in several years.

CLINTON VICTORY ON SMALLER CLASSES WITH QUALITY TEACHERS

PRESIDENT CLINTON'S GOAL	ADMINISTRATION'S PROPOSAL	FINAL AGREEMENT IN OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS BILL	PRESIDENT'S GOAL MET
CLEAR PURPOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce class size to 18 in the early grades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce class size to 18 in the early grades 	✓
FIRST STEP TOWARD HIRING 100,000 TEACHERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$1.1 billion in first year • Help school districts hire more than 30,000 teachers in the first year of a seven year-initiative to hire 100,000 teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$1.2 billion in first year • Help school districts hire more than 30,000 teachers in the first year 	✓
TARGETING NEEDIEST STUDENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted to high poverty communities using Title 1 formula 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted to high poverty communities, with 80% of funds allocated by poverty and 20% by population count 	✓
GETTING DOLLARS TO LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 99.4% of funds to local school districts • 0.0% for federal administration; 0.5% for costs to state of program administration and testing of new teachers; 0.1% for evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% to local school districts • 0.0% for federal administration; 0.0% for costs to state of program administration and testing of new teachers 0.0% for evaluation 	✓
ENSURING TEACHER QUALITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires that local school districts spend at least 10% of funds on improving teacher quality • New teachers must meet state certification requirements • New teachers must pass state-selected competency test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes 15% cap for local school district expenditures on improving teacher quality • New teachers must meet state certification requirements • School districts may use funds for teacher competency tests 	✓
ACCOUNTABILITY FOR RESULTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must produce annual school report card to parents and the public on student achievement and class size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must produce annual school report card to parents and the public on student achievement and class size 	✓

Preserve the Citizen Service Tradition

By STEPHEN E. AMBROSE

It is the nature of youth to want to explore. Youngsters yearn for challenge and new experiences and the sense of belonging to something larger than themselves. They are idealistic and want to advance their ideals through service.

It is one of the principle misfortunes of our time that we do not provide our 18- and 19-year-olds with enough opportunity to do these things, and it is one of the chief differences between America today and America a half-century ago. Then, service of some sort to the nation by the young was taken for granted, along with the notion that society would provide them with a place to serve.

In the Depression, it was the Civilian Conservation Corps, universally praised for the projects it undertook and completed and for the way it provided impoverished youngsters with a chance to serve, to travel, to get to know other young Americans from different backgrounds and parts of the country. In the Second World War and during much of the Cold War it was the armed forces, where millions of young Americans served. President John F. Kennedy tapped the same vein to create the Peace Corps. Today AmeriCorps is extending that tradition of citizen service, giving young people opportunity to serve their country here at home.

The generation of Americans now in retirement faced and overcame great challenges, starting with the Depression and including the Nazis, the Japanese militarists, and the Communists in Korea, Vietnam, and the Soviet Union. The challenges of today are not so clear, or terrifying, or dramatic. Nor are they as unifying: During World War II, a popular saying, used to respond to a complaint about this or that shortage, was "We are all in this together." Today's youth have never had that feeling. They have missed the experience of work-

ing together for a common goal as much as they have missed the chance to serve others.

It seems to me that one of the great things that came out of World War II, and to a lesser extent out of Korea and even Vietnam, was the way in which millions of young men learned to work together, to take responsibility, to become part of a team. They learned, too, to savor deferred



Michigan Historical Museum

CCC workers near Camp Au Sable, Mich.

gratification, and to take pride in contributing to their fellow man.

Today, too often, our youngsters hardly know one another. Middle class kids have little or no contact with inner-city kids. As we become a more diverse society, it is critical that we provide our youth with experiences that bring Hispanic-Americans and European-Americans, Jewish-Americans and Muslim Americans, Asian-Americans and African-Americans together, working, living, serving side-by-side. Lord knows there are plenty of challenges out there and much to be done, improving educa-

tion, fighting poverty, and protecting the environment.

In Europe, several nations require that, at 18, young people give a year of service to their country. In the U.S. it is not required, but AmeriCorps provides a voluntary opportunity to make a similar commitment. Instead of fighting enemies abroad these young Americans battle against the everyday enemies of illiteracy, poverty, and violence that plague our nation. In four years, AmeriCorps members have taught, tutored and mentored more than 2.2 million children, provided after-school programs to more than a million at-risk youth, removed close to 70,000 tons of trash from neighborhoods, and recruited more than 1.8 million volunteers to assist in these and other efforts.

AmeriCorps members, most of whom are between the ages of 18 and 24, receive a loan living allowance, and after a year of service a stipend of almost \$4,800 to help pay for college. This is similar to the 1944 GI Bill of Rights, which was the best piece of legislation Congress ever enacted. The GI bill sent hundreds of thousands of GIs to college—guys who never dreamed it would be possible for them to get a higher education—and after earning their degrees they went out and built modern America. They were part of the best educated, best disciplined, hardest working, most innovative generation of Americans ever. Today's young people, through AmeriCorps and other volunteer groups, can emulate them.

Our young people are our future. Our very soul as a nation is at stake. I cannot imagine a better investment than in youth who want to work for others and then go on with their education, taking a hand up rather than a hand out. Since 1994, more than 100,000 young men and women have pledged to "get things done" for America. This month, as AmeriCorps celebrates this milestone, let us congratulate them for their service to our country—and hope that future generations have the opportunity to follow in their footsteps.

Mr. Ambrose is author, most recently, of "Citizen Soldiers" (Simon & Schuster, 1997).

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