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KSFY-TV

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY

KSFY-TV

Q Mrs. Clinton, I think there is no (inaudible) what we heard today and we have been hearing all across the country that America has the very best health care in the world. And also I don't think there is any question that there are definite problems: affordability of insurance, controlling cost, and accessibility really.

But Senator Moynihan, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, has said there is no health care crisis, that it's an insurance crisis. What's your response to that?

MS. CLINTON: Well, I think that he is right that it's a financing crisis. That's what we have always said. I have always said that we have the finest hospitals, doctors, nurses in the world, but we have the stupidest financing system for health care in the world. And what we have to do in order to preserve the high quality of our doctors and our hospitals is to fix the financing system. And that's what we are trying to do.

Q Why not fix the finance system then instead of across-the-board reforms? A lot of Americans have said they are happy with what they have, their health insurance. Three-quarters of the Americans are happy with the medical coverage they have. Why not just address those problems specifically without widespread reform?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, that's what we are doing. I mean, what we are doing is building on the system that we already have. We are preserving Medicare for older Americans, and we are taking the employer-based health insurance system, which is where most insured Americans get their insurance, and building on it. So we agree that we want to do is to preserve and build on what works and fix what is broken.

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Q But so many people are against government control, government mandates. (Inaudible) health care alliances this will give the people an opportunity to choose between certain health care plans but it won't really give them the choice that they had before.

MRS. CLINTON: That is not true, no. That's the kind of propaganda that people, who have gained money from the way we currently finance the health care system, have been putting out. In fact, the truth is that if we do nothing, then more and more Americans will lose their health care benefits. We are already seeing an increase in uninsured Americans. More and more will be asked to pay more for the same health insurance and will lose their choice.

In fact, I was visiting the clinic here in Lennox and I was told that over in Sioux Falls many of the employees of the larger employers are being told they can no longer go to their doctors. They have to go where their employers tell them to go. That's what we want to stop. We really guarantee choice. And what is happening now does not.

Q But under the plan will I be able to go to my gynecologist, my husband to his internist, and my child to the pediatrician of our choice?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, that's your choice. It depends upon the health plan you sign up for, just as it does now.

Q But not all those doctors will necessarily belong to one of those plans --

MRS. CLINTON: Sure they will. Sure they will.

Q Not all at the same alliance. You can't guarantee that; can you?

MRS. CLINTON: You are confusing the terms. The alliance is the purchasing co-op. That has nothing to do --

Q Okay. Then, say all those doctors might not necessarily belong to one plan?

MRS. CLINTON: Right now you will have the choice that you do. You can join in a plan in which every doctor in your region belongs. That will be guaranteed. Or you can join a plan to which some doctors have subscribed. You will

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absolutely be guaranteed the right to join a plan, to see any doctor in the community, or to pay somewhat less and see doctors that work together in some kind of group practice. That's what we are guaranteeing you.

I don't care how many times the insurance industry runs their ads with Harry and Louise that says we are not. The truth is the President's plan will guarantee you the right to see your doctors.

What is happening now, mainly driven by large insurance companies trying to control cost and decide who gets coverage, you cannot be guaranteed. I don't know who pays for your health insurance now, whether you get it through your employer or through your husband's employer. But I can absolutely promise you that this time next year you may very well be faced, as are many people in Sioux Falls today, with the choice of being told you can no longer go to your doctors. The President's plan guarantees that you will be able to.

Q I can choose my doctor but I might have to pay extra.

MRS. CLINTON: Just like you do now. Right now you have to pay a co-pay, you have to pay a deductible. That's the same thing we are doing in the plan that the President has proposed.

Q But 40 percent of Americans will have to pay more under the President's plan. Employers will have to pay, from what they are currently paying, 7 percent more. I see the costs escalating as opposed to coming down. As a matter of fact the Consumer Price group has said that the spending will actually -- the health care costs, excuse me, have actually come down from 12 percent to 5 percent. So if the system is fixing itself now, why impose more controls?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, you know, one of the problems is there is all these little factoids floating around. And what is happening is that costs for the largest businesses are going down because insurance companies are cutting them better deals than they cut the small farmers we heard from today, the small businesses that we heard from today.

And one of the things that I hope people will do is to pay attention to the real truth about what is going on

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both in the health care system and in the President's plan. And the truth is that every American who is currently insured with good benefits will not pay more. Americans who are not insured, and not contributing, will have to pay something. So, yes, those 40 million of Americans who are uninsured and pay out-of-pocket for whatever health care they get, will now be paying insurance premiums instead.

And everyone who has looked at our plan honestly says that businesses and families by the turn of the century will be saving money. If we do nothing, I can guarantee you that you and your family and your employer, assuming your employer still decides to help you with your insurance, will be paying a lot more if we do not reform the system.

(The interview was concluded.)

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