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INTERVIEW WITH NEC
ST. PETERSBURG

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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AN INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY
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Q (Inaudible) pretty nasty words to talk about what happened to health care reform. They're calling it failure, things like that. What do you think went wrong, and what words would you use to describe (inaudible) health care reform?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think that health care reform made more progress in the last 20 months of becoming a matter of great national importance than it has any time in the history our country. I think that's very positive, because people are talking about it all over. And we've laid the groundwork for making the kinds of changes that people want, and I think it's been a good experience.

We have listened, and we have learned a lot about how to proceed with health care reform. I don't think it's useful to talk about who wins or who loses, whether the republicans lose or the democrats lose, or the president loses, or -- I think what's important is to talk about what happens to the American people.

And the problems that the president wants addressed in the health care system will not go away. In fact, a lot of people who have studied the systems say they will continue to get worse, so we're going to need to try to make sure we have health care available for every American at an affordable cost.

Q When do you try again to do that? Are you going to have to wait for your husband to be reelected before you start again, or next year, or the year after?

MRS. CLINTON: I think it's important to keep working on health care reform and not to stop. What form that will take I don't think anyone can say right now, but it

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will continue to be a priority of the president from this point forward.

Q I understand that your new focus is on children's issues. Is that right, or is that a misnomer (inaudible) moved on?

MRS. CLINTON: I've always been focused on children's issues. That's always been my primary concern and really one of the reasons why I was very pleased to work on health care reform for the president. It's because I worry about the millions of children who do not have access to the care that they need. I will continue to work on health care, and I will continue to do what I can to help children and families so that they can take better care of themselves, so that our children will be given better opportunities.

Q When you say you're going to continue to work on it, what do you really mean? I mean, are you coming up with another idea that you hope will be voted on eventually, or at what level are you working on this?

MRS. CLINTON: We're all working on it, and I work on it every day. I talk to people. Today I've had three people already talk to me about ideas that they have about how health care could be reformed to benefit their families or their communities. So I will continue to be speaking out about the need to reform, and working with the president and whomever else will join in helping the president achieve the objective of health care reform.

Q (Inaudible) ahead to '96, who is going to be the biggest competition to your husband?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I don't have any idea. That's up to other people to decide. But I think in the next months, and certainly by '96, the American public will know what this president has accomplished.

It is not an accident that 4.3 million new jobs have been created since he became president, or that the deficit has gone down for the third year in a row, which hasn't happened since Harry Truman was president. Many other things, like the crime bill -- and the police chief here thanked me for the crime bill and told me to thank the president. And the mayor here thanked me and asked me to thank the president for the support for cities.

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Those things are beginning to work, and people are beginning to know about them. So I think the president will continue to do what he believes is right and the American public will support that.

Q One final question. What's got -- what do you (inaudible) coming week? Anything big on your agenda that we'll be hearing about?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, the visit of President Mandela from South Africa, which starts on Tuesday and will be a very exciting moment. Because when I think about what happened when leaders like former President de Klerk and President Mandela decided to make changes in their country, I know that our country can beat whatever challenges we have. We just have to have a positive attitude, work together, and get rid of the feelings of negativism and cynicism that too often divide us. I think President Mandela's visit will remind America about what we can do in order to help ourselves.

Q And why should people vote for your brother?

MRS. CLINTON: People should vote for my brother because he is a terrific guy. And the more people get to know him, the more they like him, and he has a lot of good experience that put him face to face with the kinds of problems that Florida has.

And you have a great United States senator with Bob Graham (phonetic), who has helped the president, has voted for the programs that have made a difference in America already. It's just a shame that Bob Graham's vote gets canceled out all the time. But if Florida votes for Hugh Rodham they'll have an independent voice but a voice that will act in the best interests of Florida.

Q Okay, pretty close, and less than five minutes.

(End of interview.)

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