

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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TV ONE-ON-ONE (2) INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Q This area has always been friendly territory for the Clintons. Were you surprised at the reception, the boos, when you first took the stage?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, no. Those were organized, negative types who follow people around. I wasn't surprised at all.

What I'm really pleased about is how much positive support there is in the state of Washington and in Seattle, particularly, to try to bring about health care reform. Because, after all, this state is a real leader. What you are already doing is what we think should be done around the country.

Q Well, didn't you pick two states that are really in front of the ball when it comes to health care reform to come in and start this tour?

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. Both Oregon and Washington, along with Hawaii, have more advanced systems and are beginning to show results. And part of the reason I wanted to come here is not only I love coming here -- it's personally very pleasurable for me -- but because I want the rest of the country to know what is happening here.

I was talking to some people this morning, and this state is already beginning to realize cost savings because of the changes you have already made, with more on the way.

So the more we can let people know real information, so they can cut through the fog and the misinformation, the more support there will be for the kind of changes the President thinks will help every American.

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Q And what health care plan are you promoting this weekend?

MRS. CLINTON: The same health care plan we have always promoted which is, bottom line, universal coverage, shared responsibility between the employer and the employee, choice and quality guaranteed for Americans. And there are many ways of reaching that objective. And what we have said from the very beginning of this process is the President wanted the best possible ideas. The Congress has now spent many months looking at it. We are on the brink of a historic debate with bills in both Houses of Congress. And we are delighted at the way the Congress is taking this seriously.

Q So what you have given up, what the President gave up this week, was the specific Clinton Proposal. But you are not giving up on certain elements of that.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, no. I mean, that was the starting point. We always said that. And if you look at the kind of support for the underlying principles that the President advocates, it's between 70 and 80 percent of Americans. They want guaranteed insurance, and they want employers and employees to share the cost. That is the real cornerstone of true health care reform, as you have found out here in Washington in what you are trying to do.

Q I have to tell you, personally, I was surprised at this latest poll that found eight out of ten Americans support universal care, because it seems that many people who have insurance are now very concerned about what is going to happen to the benefits that they are getting now. How are you reassuring folks who already have insurance that they are going to get what they have, nothing worse, and it's not going to cost them anymore.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think the reason 80 percent of Americans, which includes the vast majority of us with insurance, support universal coverage is that we know we are one job, one layoff, one divorce away from not having insurance. And what the President's plan has always done, and certainly, with the modifications that are being made, is to guarantee that if you like what you have, you will be able to keep what you have.

But for many people, they don't have a good deal anymore. Their employer has told them, because of pressure

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on the employer from insurance companies: "You have got to tell your employees they can't see their own doctor anymore." We want to stop that kind of change.

So this is a very good deal for people who are already insured, who will see their costs go down and see their choices expand.

Q Will the President still use his veto pen if universal care is not in the final bill that comes out of Congress?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. For this reason: Any compromise -- as you found here in Washington, when your legislature, with your governor's leadership, was plowing through this issue. If all you try to do is make some changes around the edges, it will actually make the costs for insurance go up. And it will make more people who have insurance lose their insurance.

The President is not going to sign a bill that sounds good on the surface, but which, within a year, will have people wondering what has happened to them, because they have lost their coverage, or they have to pay so much more.

That's why if you look at Hawaii, which has been at this longer than any of our other states, everybody knows that everything is more expensive in Hawaii than on the mainland. Except health care. Health care is less expensive. Why? Because everybody is in the system.

Everybody is paying their fair share. There is a standard benefits package that sets the standard, that people have to decide how they are going to price. And you have got real competition, instead of what we have got now, which is different insurance companies trying to discriminate against people, charging small business more, dropping people when they get sick. That costs us money, and it doesn't make one person well.

Q The other reason that you are here in Washington state is a political reason; you are here to campaign for some of those who are up for re-election. How worried is the Administration of losing a working majority in Congress, and how supportive have the members from this state been to your cause?

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MRS. CLINTON: Oh, the members from Washington have been very supportive. And we have a lot to show. And I think as the campaign heats up, members in Washington will be able to say to people who live here, "You know, 18 months ago, this country was in terrible financial trouble. Jobs were disappearing. Because of the courage of the President and the members of Congress who stood with him, we have cut the deficit in half in 18 months; we have created 3.8 million new jobs." Not since Harry Truman has a President, for three consecutive budgets, brought the deficit down.

This economic recovery speaks for itself, and the people in Washington, once they really focus on it, will know that, without the leadership of the President, and the cooperation of the Washington delegation, this would not have been possible. So I feel very good about the prospects for the upcoming congressional election.

Q Two quick personal questions. How difficult was it to give up the plan that you worked on for two years? And second -- you can answer them both at the same time, since we are running out of time -- for you, have you set the standard that any First Lady that follows you is going to have a difficult time of achieving?

MRS. CLINTON: You know, I don't care and my husband doesn't care who gets credit for health care reform; all we care is that America gets health care reform. And we have said that until we are literally blue in the face. We don't absolutely have any pride of authorship, except for the bottom line, which is, everybody, no matter whom you work for or how old you are or whether you have been sick, should be guaranteed insurance. So I am thrilled that we have made as much progress as we have in the last 18 months.

And my hope is that, for all women, they will have the opportunity to make the choices that are right for them in their lives. You know, I have worked most of my life. Right now, I am a fulltime volunteer. I always did a lot of volunteer work, on the side, working with, particularly, children's charities over the years. I think people who commit their lives to fulltime homemaking and child rearing should be given the same respect that anybody who makes any other choice. And likewise, women who work full time, they should be given respect in the work place.

But for most women, it's a juggling act. We are

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responsible for our families and being able to take care of all of the obligations there. And at some point in our lives, we are often in the world of work outside the home.

I don't want anybody stereotyping any woman. I want all women to be given the respect they deserve for the choices they make.

So for anyone who were to come after me, she should or he should be free to do what is right in light of their obligations to their family, themselves, and the country. That is what I'm working for.

Q Thank you very much for spending some time with us.

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you very much.

Q Pleasure meeting you.

MRS. CLINTON: Glad to be with you.

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