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PRES. VANDERBILT

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HOUSTON, TEXAS

MRS. CLINTON: I think it is very significant that one of the five major committees dealing with health care reform reported out a bill that guarantees that every American will have health security and also does some important other things like investing more in medical research and investing in preventive care, and making it cheaper for businesses to buy health care. So I think that's very important, and I think that's a good step in the right direction.

Q Is it the one out of five that you wanted to see come out first?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, we didn't have any preference about that. I mean, this is hard work. If it were easy, somebody else would have done it. But we finally have a President who is willing to take on the hard issues, and that's why health care is on the agenda. The thing that I believe is very important for Texans and for Americans in general is to realize what's really at stake in this debate, because, my goodness, there has been a lot of false information and advertising and some rather heated rhetoric about what reform would do, when the real issue is, what will happen without reform?

You know, Texas has one of the highest percentages of uninsured citizens of any state in America. More than 25 percent of all Texans have no health insurance. And many, many more have inadequate health insurance. Now, why is that important to people who have health insurance, like I hope all of you do? It's important because if you go down this line -- I've already approached there people on this line, which is not that any folks here, who don't have insurance, who are desperate for some kind of help. What happens is, eventually they get it, but they often get it too late, at the most expensive point of entry, often the emergency room.

So, what does that mean? That means we take care of people eventually, but we take the money that they cannot pay and spread it among the rest of us, which is why if you or I

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go to the hospital with our insurance, we might get charged \$25 for an aspirin. It's not because the aspirin costs \$25. It's because we've taken care of 25 percent, some portion of that, of Texans who don't have insurance, and somebody's got to pay the bill.

Q One last question. Last question.

Q If (inaudible) the first to come out of committee, how do you keep this from becoming a horse race, and one of the plans, one of the five plans coming through that may not be the best for the country?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, the President has said clearly the most important issue is to have quality affordable health care for every American, so any bill that comes out has to meet that standard. But there are different ways of achieving it. I just hope that the people of Texas will ask their Representatives and their Senators some hard questions.

Why are they willing to take taxpayer-supported health insurance as members of Congress through what amounts to an employer mandate, but they won't give health insurance to everybody who lives in Texas? That is one of the issues that everybody who lives in this state ought to ask everybody who represents them in Congress. All the President and I want is for every American to have the same option that every member of Congress and every federal employee has now, and that is, health insurance paid for by the employer, namely, the federal government, and the employee that guarantees choice of doctor, nurse, and hospital, guarantees quality, and is always there when you need it. So, if that is the issue, if that's how it is framed, then we are going to be successful.

Q Thank you.

(End of press availability.)

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