

PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON  
REMARKS AT UNVEILING OF BREAST CANCER STAMP  
THE EAST ROOM  
JULY 29, 1998**

Welcome to the East Room and the White House. Starting this week, all Americans will be able to open up their hearts and mailboxes and help stamp out breast cancer once and for all. And when we do, it will be in large part because of the people in this room, and the people you represent all over our country.

It will be because of the Postal Service, which is delivering -- along with our mail -- a new weapon in the fight against breast cancer. I especially want to thank our new Postmaster General, Bill Henderson, for his vision and leadership; the Postal Board of Governors; the New Stamp Advisory Committee; and all the postal employees, some of whom are watching by satellite right now.

When we stamp out breast cancer it will be because of the artistry of Ethel Kessler and Whitney Sherman. And the tireless advocacy of Dr. Ernie Bodai, Betsy Mullen, and all the survivors who are standing up and speaking out to stop breast cancer and heal those it strikes. It will be because of Secretary Shalala's extraordinary leadership at the Department of Health and Human Services, starting when she convened a group to come up with a national action plan against breast cancer.

It will certainly be because of the Members of Congress -- some of whom are here today, from both the Senate and the House -- who, year in and year out have demanded that breast cancer be placed at the top of our national agenda -- where it belongs.

I want to pay special tribute to the architects of the Stamp Out Breast Cancer Act -- Senator Feinstein and Congressman Fazio. Thank you for your creativity that brought this idea to the Halls of Congress, and your dedication that helped make it the law of the land.

In fact, back in 1996, when Dr. Bodai went to his Congressman with the idea for a breast cancer stamp, he encountered a leader who has always cared deeply about finding a cure for breast cancer; someone who knows that we must continue to increase funding for all biomedical research, and someone who has always backed up these convictions with action. It is now my great honor to introduce Dr. Bodai's congressman, Congressman Vic Fazio.

*[Speaking portion.]*

*[First Lady resumes speaking.]*

Thank you so much for that speech. Did she do a great job? Thank you for your

comments, but also for all you've done to help other women get the support and care and information they need to "WIN Against Breast Cancer." As I was listening to Betsy's story, I thought about her journey. I thought about the courage and commitment she demonstrated, and I thought about how far we've all traveled. I thought about all the women I know who have, themselves, fought breast cancer. I have a friend who today is having a mastectomy, and I thought about how not so long ago, the words breast cancer were barely whispered in the dark, if they were said at all.

It was a disease that women and men did not feel comfortable talking about, were ashamed of, embarrassed by. Now we can turn all of that fear and anguish into the kind of courage and commitment we saw embodied in Betsy and all of you who are here and are survivors of breast cancer, all of you who are family members of victims of breast cancer. You have helped turn that energy into a national call to action. Today, we have given something for every American to respond to that call to action. Most of us will not be the surgeons who will assist them, and nurses who will comfort them. Most of us will not be researchers or scientists in the lab making the breakthrough in genetic research. Most of us will not be senators or congressmen/women who are voting on legislation to increase funding in the battle against breast cancer.

Each of us, when we send our letters or pay our bills, can put this stamp of hope on the envelope. Every time we do, we will be contributing to the research that will reap hope and pray for our children, transform breast cancer from a daily threat to a distant memory. Every time we look at this wonderful stamp, so beautifully designed and illustrated, we can see the face of someone we know and love. We can see our mothers, our sisters, our daughters, our friends, our neighbors, our colleagues.

There are so many women who have endured what Betsy described to us. Many of the women who work for me here in the White House, many of the women who volunteer, and many of the women on the president's and vice president's staff, so many women throughout the government, so many women on Capitol Hill, so many women here in Washington -- have heard the words. But today, we know that we have an opportunity to do something to show our support in a very tangible way.

I urge all Americans to join in the fight against breast cancer. To do it in a lot of different ways -- by listening to those who were told that they were diagnosed with cancer. Call your friends and your relatives and your colleagues, and phone those who are facing chemotherapy, or radiation, or surgery. Laugh with them, go shopping -- to buy hats and wigs and scarves. Don't be embarrassed ever again to show your love and support to someone who is suffering from this tragic disease. Also make sure that you not only buy the stamp, but you tell your friends, neighbors, and colleagues to do the same. We know that we've come a long way in our fight against breast cancer. The President has a very personal reason for urging increases in research that he has urged, the Congress has supported. He lost his mother to breast cancer after a valiant fight.

We've seen great progress in the work that is being done by government-funded research and clinical trials. The Department of Defense Breast Cancer Research Program has dramatically expanded. Women receiving Medicare can now get annual mammograms, without any deductibles. We've launched an annual campaign to educate older women about the benefits of mammography. Under Secretary Shalala's leadership, we've seen the birth and growth of the National Action Plan on Breast Cancer, a public/private partnership working towards one goal, and one goal alone: the final eradication of breast cancer.

We are facing a critical juncture in the war on cancer -- not only breast cancer, but other forms of cancer as well. Our commitment as a nation is finally beginning to pay off. We have put a lot of government dollars and private dollars and a lot of hearts into this fight against cancer.

With more invested in this critical time, we can really break through in a dramatic way on the cancer front.

We have many obstacles.-- and whenever I think about obstacles, I think about my late mother-in-law. She never wanted anyone to feel sorry for her when she had breast cancer. As with every other adversity she faced in her life, she'd get up at the crack of dawn, put on her lipstick and false eyelashes and go out and celebrate life. She was a great inspiration in all of us who knew and loved her. I remember the sampler she kept by her nightstand that read: "Lord, help me to remember that nothing is going to happen to me today that you and I can't handle."

I've seen that same courage in the eyes and heard it in the voices of so many women. I hope that all of us will do whatever we can to expand coverage for Medicare cancer clinical trials, to look for new initiatives -- like this wonderful idea of a stamp -- and to fulfill the President's request for an additional 65 percent increase in cancer research.

We also have to be sure that no matter what kind of insurance policy a woman has, whether it's managed care or traditional care, she will always get the best care. When a woman is told she has breast cancer, she should know that every effective treatment is being used to help her. She and her physician should be making the decisions about her health, not a business person or a book keeper in an office hundreds of miles away.

Most importantly, if a woman with breast cancer has already embarked on a course of treatment with her doctor -- even if her employer switches insurance plans, she must still have access to that doctor she trusts. She should never have to switch doctors in the middle of her treatment, as too many women have been told in the last two years. Imagine how you would feel if you or your mother, your wife, your daughter, had developed this trust towards the doctor treating her in this life-threatening, life-altering disease -- suddenly dropped from the insurance plan, or had an employer change plans in midstream -- and that woman was told that she has to go somewhere else, with someone she does not know, and start over again. That's one of the many reasons we need a Patient's Bill of Rights.

On September 26, thousands will gather on the Mall for a march to conquer all cancers for all time. I hope you'll send letters with this stamp, telling a lot of your friends about that march.

In order to conquer breast cancer and other cancers, we need the commitment and efforts of every single person in this country. We will need the courage that has been shown by all you who are breast cancer survivors. We need the confidence that comes with knowing where to win our part in this brave fight.

I want to thank all of you who have helped bring us to this time, and urge all of us to continue to do everything within our individual power to win this fight against breast cancer for our mothers, our wives, our daughters, our friends, for ourselves.

Thank you very much.