

auto industry, do something to control health care costs. And as Mr. Panetta just said again in a rather plaintive way before you came in, there is no way we will ever get control of the Federal budget deficit unless we do something about health care.

The message is pretty simple. It's time to make sense of America's health care system. It's time to bring costs under control and to make our families and businesses secure. It's time to make good on the American promise that too many people have talked about for too long, while we have continued to spend more than 30 percent more of our income on health care than any other nation in the world, get less for it, and see 100,000 Americans a month losing their health insurance.

As a first step in responding to the demands of literally millions of Americans, today I am announcing the formation of the President's Task Force on National Health Reform. Although the issue is complex, the task force's mission is simple: Build on the work of the campaign and the transition, listen to all parties, and prepare health care reform legislation to be submitted to Congress within 100 days of our taking office.

This task force will be chaired by the First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and will include the Secretaries of Health and Human Services, Treasury, Defense, Veterans Affairs, Commerce, Labor, as well as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and senior White House staff members.

I am grateful that Hillary has agreed to chair this task force and not only because it means she'll be sharing some of the heat I expect to generate. As many of you know, while I was Governor of my State, Hillary chaired the Arkansas Education Standards Committee, which created public school accreditation standards that have since become a model for national reform. She served as my designee on the Southern Regional Task Force on Infant Mortality, was also chair of our State's rural health committee in 1979 and 1980, a time in which we initiated a number of health care reforms that benefit the people of my State to the present day. And on the board of the Arkansas Children's Hospital, she helped to establish our State's first neonatal unit.

I think that in the coming months the American people will learn, as the people of our State did, that we have a First Lady of many

talents, who most of all can bring people together around complex and difficult issues to hammer out consensus and get things done.

Here in the White House, Hillary will work with my Domestic Policy Adviser, Carol Rasco; my Senior Policy Adviser, Ira Magaziner; and the head of our health care transition team, Judy Feder. I've asked all of them to be as inclusive as possible. And as a part of that, we are inviting the American public to write us here at the White House with their suggestions. All of them should be sent to the Task Force on National Health Care Reform at the White House in Washington, DC 20500.

We will no doubt be criticized by some for undertaking something very, very ambitious. But as I said in my Inaugural Address, we're going to have to make some tough choices in order to control health care costs, to bring them down within inflation, and to provide health care for all. In order to preserve the vitality of the American private sector, in order to keep the American people's budget here at this national level from going totally bankrupt, we are going to have to make some tough choices. Powerful lobbies and special interests may seek to derail our efforts, and we may make some people angry. But we are determined to come up with the best possible solution.

And in my lifetime, at least, there has never been so much consensus that something has to be done. We have a plan from the American Nurses Association, from the American Academy of Physicians, from the American Academy of Family Practice, from the health insurance industry itself. We have a plan uniting business and labor. There is an overwhelming knowledge that we have to move and move now. We are going to do our best to reform our system. We are going to do our best to meet the human needs of the people of this country.

There are all kinds of problems that have to be dealt with that we haven't even discussed yet: access to care in inner cities and rural areas, coverage for little children, dealing with the AIDS crisis adequately, still unmet needs in the area of women's health care, the problem of the veterans in this country who don't have access to care, even as their own network goes broke. All these issues will be dealt with in this task force. This is going to be an unprecedented effort. And let me just say, in general, we're going to set up a workroom, kind of like the war room we had in the campaign, over