

want to provide the best possible care. We want to do everything in our power to help them.

Third, we must educate Medicare beneficiaries about long-term care options. Medicare does not cover most kinds of long-term care, so it is important that beneficiaries understand their alternatives. This initiative helps to answer essential questions efficiently: What are my choices; what should I look for in private long-term care insurance policies? By launching a national education campaign, we can help to ensure people get the answers they need when they need them and the quality care they deserve.

Fourth, I am proposing that the Federal Government, as the Nation's largest employer, use its market leverage to set an example, offering private long-term care insurance to Federal employees. By promoting high-quality, affordable care, we can encourage more people and more companies to invest in long-term care coverage. We can help more employees in every part of our economy to prepare for the future.

There's no single solution to the challenges of caregiving. But together, these initiatives represent a powerful first step to force the kind of changes we need in our society. To fulfill our fundamental obligations to older Americans and people with disabilities, we must act together, members of both parties, both branches of Government, putting progress above partisanship. I believe there is an enormous amount of interest in and support for this initiative in the Congress, and I thank the Members who have come here today.

I hope that the Congress will do many things on this front in the coming session. I hope these initiatives will pass. Senator Breaux will soon give us a Medicare Reform Commission report; I hope we will save Medicare for the 21st century. I hope we will use the surplus to save Social Security for the 21st century. All of these things will help to strengthen America as we go forward.

The senior boom is one of the central challenges of the coming century. I can tell you that, as literally the oldest of the baby boomers, those of us born right after World War II, one of the central worries of my generation is that, as we age, we will impose unsustainable burdens on our children and undermine their ability to raise our grandchildren. We must use this time now to do everything in our power not only to lift the quality of life and the security of

the aged and disabled today, and the baby boom aged and disabled, but to make sure that we do not impose that intolerable burden on our children.

I have asked the Vice President—who will speak with us, along with Mrs. Gore, in just a moment—to conduct a series of forums around the country on this initiative, to solicit other ideas and reach out to people and to build grassroots support. We want to hear from the people of the country about how we can help to meet the long-term care needs of their loved ones.

Again, let me thank all the people in the administration who worked on this, the Members of Congress who are here, the members of the aging and disability community who are here. And I thank you, Patricia Darlak, for your moving statement. Hillary and I have had our own experiences with long-term care of our parents—in my case, our grandparents. We have seen the Vice President and Mrs. Gore deal with the same challenge. So this is a personal thing that I think we feel very deeply.

I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to the Vice President, because he's had such an interest in our family caregiving program. He is now going to speak to us from California. He's coming up on the satellite, along with Mrs. Gore, and he's got some folks with him who know quite a bit about this.

Good morning, Mr. Vice President. The floor is yours. Good morning, Tipper.

*[At this point, Vice President Al Gore and his wife, Tipper, made brief remarks by satellite.]*

*The President.* Thank you very much. I want to thank the Vice President and Tipper, and also all the folks that are out there with them in California, for the example they are setting and the initiatives that are being made in California. I know the Vice President is about to go to the new Governor's inauguration out there. You ought to take the opportunity to put in a plug for what we're doing there. I'm sure you will. *[Laughter]*

Ladies and gentlemen, let me say again how grateful I am for all the people who worked on this proposal, for the advocates for the elderly and the disabled who are here, for the very large representation from Congress. And thank you again for the passion and the commitment that you manifested in your statement and for having the courage to come here and tell us