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NORTH GENERAL HOSPITAL

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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AN INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY
NORTH GENERAL HOSPITAL

Q (Inaudible) questions?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, for several reasons. Congressman Rankin, who has been working very closely with the administration on health care, and as you know is a very important player in the Congress because of his position on the Ways and Means Committee -- has a great deal of regard for this hospital -- worked very hard with the governor to make this new construction possible and sees this hospital doing what needs to be done, which is providing medical services in an underserved area in a cost-effective, quality-driven way.

So I wanted to see what a hospital like this, in this kind of community, could actually do when it was given the resources, as this one has -- it's upgraded facilities -- and get prepared for health care reform.

Q (Inaudible) helping the man with these (inaudible) kids and the parents over there?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, you know, you could see that each one of those children had a problem that needed continuing medical care, like sickle cell anemia. You had asthma, gastroenteritis -- and that for many of those children their family unit did not have health care coverage, or they had problems getting on or staying on Medicaid coverage, and it is not good for them to be without coverage.

So they know where they can go in the system at any time to get appropriate care. It's not just for the hospital that -- the only place patients enter into is the emergency room -- because the cost of emergency room care is much greater than the cost of regular preventive health care. And I'm always struck.

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You know, you could see the adults who were with those children. They were caring, they were concerned adults, whether they were grandmothers or foster parents, or parents. And the system just doesn't give them any help to be able to navigate, to get the services that they need for their children.

Once we have everyone insured, which is what we're going to do with health care reform, then we'll be able to help manage the care of everyone, particularly children, because we're going to provide preventive care, we're going to make sure that everybody has what you could call a kind of medical home, so that they have a doctor, a nurse, a physician's assistant. They've got somebody that they can relate to.

The emergency room then is left for emergency. We're going to save money and get everybody covered.

Q Mrs. Clinton, do you think that battle for health care in Congress would be adversely affected by the current Whitewater scandal and the backlash?

MRS. CLINTON: No. No, in fact I think just the opposite. I think that it highlights what's real and what's important, and that's health care reform. And it also, I think, is very important to emphasize what the Congressman, Mr. McCabe (phonetic), said. You know, people can try to divert attention or distract us from the real business of the country, but when you go and you look at these children, and you talk to a mother like the one Mr. McCabe just referred to, who gets up every day and goes to work, what she's interested in is the Congress and the President working together to solve her problem.

And that's what we're going to keep doing, because that's why my husband ran for President. That's why he was elected, and I think that's why we had such a good year during the first year of his administration, because we've tried to take on tough problems, and that's what we're going to keep on doing.

And health care is going to get done this year. Right, guys?

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