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 Office of the Vice President
 

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 REMARKS OF THE VICE PRESIDENT  
 AT THE  
 DEDICATION OF PARK RIDGE HOSPITAL  
 (Greece, New York)

(3:11 P.M. EDT)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Reverend, Mr. Kitt, your two distinguished Congressmen -- Barber Conable and Frank Horton -- all of the distinguished officials, past and present here, and a special thanks to Supervisor Tom Riley. I would just like to say to Tom that I worked for a Board of Supervisors for 21 years as the Vice Chairman of the Board of Health of Westchester County, so that I had very intimate and happy associations; also, later as Governor.

I would like to congratulate and salute Chairman Gibson, President Dutcher, the directors, the doctors, the nurses, the patients of the Park Ridge Hospital, and all of you friends. I want to tell you to me this sort of is America at its best here today, a wonderful gathering of concerned citizens who care about their community and who have done what was needed to meet the problems of the community.

I am proud to be here in this wonderful gathering at the invitation of Frank Horton -- I just left Frank Horton on the other side of the line so you have to excuse me -- Barber Conable. We have been traveling together all day and this is the first time I am in Barber's district. Barber, forgive me.

(Laughter.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: But to be in the town of Greece which is one of the sort of wonder towns, the fastest growing community, with all of the qualities that one thinks about that go with this great Nation of ours, and here on this occasion which symbolizes this community effort, this joining of all of the factors together in a common concern for people and their well-being.

I think that Barber Conable in his own service in the Congress of the United States, although I had the pleasure of knowing him when he was in the State Senate and working with him there, he has won a place for himself, not only as a distinguished Representative from New York but as a man who is respected in this country as one of the leaders in the Congress. He is on the Ways and Means Committee, which is one of the key committees. He is on the new Budget Committee of the House which is assuming more importance all the time as we go into these very difficult days.

Our whole tradition of generosity in this country has led us into trying to meet needs and doing things for people which have brought us to a point where

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we have gone a little bit beyond our means. So we are facing a serious deficit and serious problems, and Barber's participation in the Budget Committee is of tremendous importance. New York is indeed fortunate to have Barber Conable and Frank Horton from this great State and this wonderful part of the State representing us.

Now I would just like to say, as I did, that I am honored to be here and that I am very happy to have the opportunity to be here in person. I sent a congratulatory message at one point in one of your ceremonies, the groundbreaking, and now I am delighted to have the chance to be with you today back in New York again and back in Monroe County.

To dedicate this facility you are standing as one of the most progressive and impressive parts of this country. I want to say how much I admire the concern and initiative of all of the private citizens of the town of Greece.

Like Ralph, who has just spoken to you who really in a way symbolizes all that we have been talking about because he has been the man who has, through his dedication and his stick-to-itiveness, made possible and given the leadership through his talents and efforts as the head of the committee the realization of this program today, I would like to congratulate him and Mr. Woods and the doctors and the staff who operate the hospital. I know how helpful it has been to have Barber Conable supporting this project all the way.

This hospital epitomizes the American way of getting things done -- when we do them right. The idea for the hospital was born in the minds of concerned citizens in the community. It was financed in part by private funds. It was funded for the most part, 90 percent, by loans guaranteed by the State. That loan guarantee program was passed during the years I had the privilege of serving as your Governor, as has been mentioned, so please forgive me if I take a little special satisfaction in sharing this day with you.

Good health facilities such as the new Park Ridge Hospital have an importance that extends beyond medical care alone. In order for every American to have a chance to reach his or her fullest human potential, two things are absolutely necessary -- the opportunity to get a good education and the opportunity to enjoy good health and living in a free society with equal opportunity for all. Given these two very basic opportunities, people in our free society can go just as far as their God-given talents will take them.

In my opinion, access to good health care ought to be considered a fundamental right. It belongs up there with freedom of speech and the rest of the Bill of Rights, for the same reason, because our society benefits as a whole to the extent that every American can better himself or herself as an individual.

Recently I took part in the announcement of a health care productivity center that is opening in Texas with Federal and local hospital funds. The principal purpose of this productivity center is to get maximum value out of every dollar, the efforts of every doctor and nurse, and every piece of equipment through cooperative arrangements between the hospitals in the area.

For example, through shared purchasing, hospitals can buy supplies in volume at discounts ranging up to 35 percent. Or take the case of sharing equipment. A linear accelerator used to give cancer patients cobalt treatment costs about \$400,000. It is far less costly to have one such machine that can be used fully on a shared basis than to have two or three in nearby hospitals being underused.

Through shared purchasing, shared personnel, shared equipment and good management, the Texas Productivity Center expects to save about \$14 million for its participating hospitals in the next two years. This is money which would otherwise have to come out of the pockets of patients in the form of higher medical bills, insurance premiums, or taxes.

When it comes to health, we need to achieve two things -- health security for all Americans and good management, cost controls and efficiency in the delivery of medical care.

What we need is a system of health care that will build on what we have, one that will preserve the freedom of choice for patients and medical practitioners, one that will assure every American of health security without undermining the economy that must finance everything to which we aspire.

I am optimistic that we will be equal to the task. My optimism is rooted in these facts. We in America have a health care system of great diversity and, therefore, of great vitality. In typical American tradition, there are both public and private elements to it. Thus, it contains creative diversity rather than cramped conformity.

Secondly, we Americans are inventive and innovative people. We have a problem-solving orientation. We admire action. We are going to achieve good health security for the American people, and we can do it. The most encouraging proof that we can is the sense of individual commitment, professional capability, and public and private cooperation that we have witnessed here today. Therefore, to all of you my warmest congratulations, and thank you for letting me have the privilege of participating with you on this occasion. Best of luck to all of you. Thank you.

(Applause.)

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(3:20 P.M. EDT)