

SPEAKER: HEW Secretary Caspar Weinberger said today that health care improvements will come from building on our historic existing strengths rather than tearing down the entire structure because of our dissatisfaction. In an address to the American health Congress in Chicago, the Secretary said his department was absolutely and totally committed to do whatever may be necessary to assure that quality health care is readily and equally available to every American who needs it. He said, however, that meeting this goal means devising a total health strategy in which every possible program or option is carefully and objectively weighed against each other and against the limits of our present revenue resources before decisions are made.

"No longer are we committed to support all ongoing programs," said the Secretary, "just because we once decided to start them. "We have made the basic decision to build on our historic strengths in the health care field," he said, "closing obvious gaps, making needed improvements, and instituting prudent innovations rather than tearing down the entire structure because of our dissatisfactions and starting on something entirely different." He said the nation would not stand by while inner city residents lack decent health care.

120 American counties are without medical facilities and health personnel. Costs skyrocket past the means of average citizens, and the dangerous trend toward overspecialization in medical practice continues. "This administration is prepared to pay the bill for an improved health care system," said Secretary Weinberger, "but only for concrete results." He said that means that while we're raising the federal investment in health care, we are also reducing the unrealistic expectations of some program managers. We are also determined to make each federal dollar stretch further.

He noted that for the current fiscal year, the president has proposed a 21% increase in health funding. That amounts to nearly \$4 billion more and brings the total federal health investment to nearly twice the annual amount spent when President Nixon took office. He said the administration's total health strategy involves a number of new initiatives and a conscious attempt to weave together existing programs which meet well-defined needs and new approaches which not only fill present gaps, but will meet estimated future needs.

He said the four highest priorities are national health insurance, health care cost control, the national cancer and heart programs, and movement toward an all volunteer blood supply. "Other health efforts underway, he said, "Included a national program to combat hypertension, extension of Medicare coverage to 1.7 million disabled people under age 65, including those with chronic kidney disease, a program to redirect and make more effective the comprehensive health planning units, establishment of a network of professional standards review organizations which will review the quality and the necessity of Medicare and Medicaid services and programs such as the National Health Service Corps designed to attract doctors and other health professionals into areas where medical skills are short or nonexistent." This is Bill. We're in Chicago for KSJN. An.