overall reform of the Medicare system. That ought to bring some pause. We do not really know what overall reform is. I think most seniors would say: We have confidence in the Medicare system. We want a program that will get the benefits to us quickly.

He says that low-income people will not have to wait for the overall reform. We are not sure what that really means. To have your prescription drugs covered, Governor Bush will establish the immediate helping hand which will provide $48 billion to States for 4 years to deal with low income seniors. So it will be 4 years before 27 million seniors will be able to participate because there are 27 million seniors who do not fall within Governor Bush's definition of those who need an immediate helping hand. Those 27 million seniors will wait 4 years—and then wait for the overall Medicare reform. The Vice President's plan goes into effect 1 year from now.

Second—and I think enormously important—is what we call the guaranteed benefit. This is very simple. A guaranteed benefit means the doctor will make the decision on your prescription drug needs. When seniors go in—whatever their condition, whatever their disease, whatever their problem—the doctor makes the recommendation as to what prescription drug is needed. That is fundamental. That is the guaranteed benefit.

That is not true with regard to the Governor's proposal. It will be the HMO that the individual is enrolled in that will decide. We will find that the HMO will make the decision about what prescription drugs are covered—whether it will be the only drug on the HMO's formulary, or whether other kinds of prescription drugs will be permitted to be used.

That is interesting, is it not, Mr. President? Most seniors want the doctor to make the recommendation. This underlies the basic difference between our two parties on the prescription drug issue.

We are for the Patients' Bill of Rights so doctors are allowed to make health care decisions. We want to make sure that doctors are going to make decisions about prescription drugs rather than turning this right over to the HMO.

Finally, what is being established under the Gore proposal is very clear. The government and the Medicare beneficiary will have a shared responsibility in paying for prescription drugs. There will not be any deductibles. There will be a premium, and half of the premium will be paid for by the Federal Government.

Under the Bush proposal, we do not know what the HMO is going to charge. There is no prohibition against a deductible and we do not know what the copayments will be. We have no idea what the premium will be. The Governor says the government will pay 25 percent of whatever the premium is, but there is no assurance to seniors that there is not going to be a sizable deductible in that program. The size of the deductible is a mystery.

Under the Vice President's program, we can give assurance today that when the program goes into effect, as part of the Medicare program, whatever that senior citizen needs, if the doctor prescribes it, that senior citizen will get it.

Those who are opposed to Vice President GORE's program, who support the Governor's proposal, cannot make that claim. They cannot tell us what the premiums are going to be over a period of time because they are not spelled out, at least in the papers that have been made available.

The only thing that we know—which causes many of us a great deal of concern—is that after 4 years, after overall reform of the Medicare system, then there will be a program for prescription drugs. That is a long time to wait. That is a very long time to wait. What I have found in my State is that people want a prescription drug program and they need it now.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's 8 minutes have expired.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, the final points I want to make are that 70 percent of Medicare beneficiaries, more than 27 million seniors, will not even be eligible for Governor Bush's immediate helping hand program.

Finally, the nation's Governors have already rejected the block grant approach. Republican and Democratic Governors have said: This will be a massive administrative nightmare for our States; we do not want the responsibility even if it is going to be funded. We can understand that.

We have an important opportunity to make a difference for our seniors with a good prescription drug program. Let's reach across the aisle. Let's join forces. Let's try to get the job done before we recess. The opportunity is there. We are willing to do that, but we need to have a response from the other side and a willingness of the Republican leadership to try to get the job done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired. The Senator from Idaho has 10 minutes.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, while I came to the floor to speak on another issue, before I do that, I want to respond to the remarks of the Senator from Massachusetts.

There is a very real difference between what Vice President GORE is talking about and Gov. George Bush is talking about. Senator KENNEDY has effectively outlined it today. Senator KENNEDY said let the Government run your health care; let the Government make your choices; let the Government control the process.

The seniors of America do want choice. They want the same kind of health program Senator KENNEDY has and this Senator has. They want choice, and they want flexibility in the marketplace. That is the kind of program we are talking about offering them.

I cannot imagine we would want another federalized health care program where the Government tells the senior community of our country what kind of prescription drug they will get and where they will get it.

Those are very real differences that I am afraid were avoided in the comments this morning.

FALN CLEMENCY

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I came to the floor to talk about a significant date in this Nation's fight against terrorism. This week marks the Clinton-Gore administration's decision to jeopardize American lives by surrendering to one of the most violent terrorist groups ever to operate on this country's soil.

One year ago this week, President Clinton opened the jailhouse doors for 11 members of a terrorist group known as the FALN, which is dedicated to the violent pursuit of Puerto Rican independence. The FALN has claimed responsibility for some 130 bombings at civilian, political, and military sites in the United States. In all, the group murdered six Americans and maimed, often permanently, 84 others, including law enforcement officers.

On one occasion, members attacked a Navy bus in Puerto Rico killing two sailors and wounding nine others. As a result, 16 members of this violent terrorist group were convicted of dozens of felonies against the United States, and as soon as these 16 were in prison, the bombings stopped.

I note that these violent terrorists were convicted of at least 36 counts of violating Federal firearms control laws. So at the same time the Clinton-Gore administration was demanding more gun control—and we have heard it for hours and hours on end on the floor of the Senate and certainly the White House has spoken openly for gun control over the last number of years—not only were they failing to enforce current gun laws already on the books, but when those laws are enforced, they brush aside felony convictions as a political favor to their friends.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I yield to the Senator from Oklahoma for a moment to speak specifically about how this administration has mishandled the gun control laws of our Nation.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I will add to my friend's thoughtful analysis. This is yet another example of the President's apparent lack of concern for the rule of law. All year long, the administration has berated the Republican majority for not doing enough on controlling gun violence. Yet at the same time, by releasing these terrorists, he has set aside 36 specific Federal firearms convictions pertaining to:

Possessing an unregistered firearm;

Possession of firearms during the commission of seditious conspiracy;

Transport of firearms with intent to commit seditious conspiracy;

Possession of firearm without a serial number;

Conspiracy to make destructive devices.

Let there be no mistake, these were not people merely exercising their first amendment right of freedom of speech. They are responsible for the deaths of six Americans and the injury of at least 84 others.

One has to wonder why the administration will not simply enforce existing law. The record shows the Clinton-Gore administration has not enforced Federal gun laws, and more disturbing, they have conveniently forgotten the law if it suits their political ends. I believe the President's efforts for these terrorists were just that.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Oklahoma. He so clearly spells out the frustration Americans have when we are going to be tough against terrorism and then see a President offering clemency.

In 1982, the FALN detonated four powerful bombs in New York's financial district and demanded better treatment for 11 of their jailed comrades and members. One year ago this week, President Clinton freed 8 of those 11, shredding the longstanding policy of the United States of not granting concessions to terrorists.

Any reasonable American has to ask, Why would the President do it? What is he doing setting violent terrorists free to once again roam the streets of America? None of these terrorists contested the evidence brought against them at trial. None of these terrorists apologized to their victims. In fact, at least one of the freed terrorists stated that he felt no remorse whatsoever for his crimes. None of these terrorists were ever asked to be let out of prison. The FBI asked the President not to do it. The Federal Bureau of Prisons asked the President not to do it.

Had he bothered to ask the victims of the FALN and their families, they would have begged him not to do it. He did it anyway, and we are not quite sure why.

Internal White House documents tell us, ''The Vice President's Puerto Rican position would be helped,'' clearly demonstrating an impulse to jeopardize public safety for political gain. Political gain by setting terrorists loose.

A former political adviser to President Clinton put it this way:

> Anyone who doesn't believe the timing, and the likely substance of [President Clinton's] decision was linked to the [First Lady's] courtship of New York's large Puerto Rican [community] is too naive for politics.

If there is one thing this administration has accomplished in its 8 years, it is to shatter my naivete or my trust that when the President stands up and speaks, that there is not some political or clandestine motive behind his very actions.

One year later, what do we have? Eleven violent terrorists at large on our streets; two more to be released this coming year. True, there have not been any killings that we can link to the terrorists since that time, but they are loose on the streets of America demonstrating at least that this President has violated a cardinal rule in our country: the United States does not make concessions to terrorists.

For that action, one year ago today, Democrats and Republicans stood on this floor and condemned this deplorable act. Interestingly, when I began to look into this, I saw that AL GORE's running mate Senator JOE LIEBERMAN stood up to the President and condemned his actions. Even the First Lady stood up to the President and condemned his actions. Just about the only politician in Washington who has yet to stand up to Bill Clinton is Vice President AL GORE.

As Vice President of the United States, AL GORE could have intervened. He could have talked to the President, said that this is madness to let terrorists loose after they have been convicted, to shred gun control laws. But AL GORE did not lift a finger to protect the FALN's next victims. All he said was, quote:

> I'm not going to stand in judgment of his decision.

Not going to stand in judgment? When a madman killed 168 people in a single bombing in Oklahoma City, AL GORE said, and I quote:

> [T]o those of you who doubt our resolve in America, listen closely. If you plot terror or act on those designs, within our borders or without, against American citizens, we will hunt you down and stop you cold.

I guess what he is saying is: Bomb innocent Americans, and AL GORE will stop you cold. But if you use small bombs, and you only kill a few Americans, and you fit our political needs, then we will release you.

Mr. Vice President, maybe it is time you stand up and clarify for America what you really believe.

Mr. Vice President, how hard is it to say: ''Violent terrorists belong in jail''? How hard is it to say: ''I will not reward terrorism''? How hard is it to tell the American people: ''I will not release violent terrorists from prison for political gain''?

AL GORE is going to be in Manhattan today. I hope he will visit the corner of Pearl and Broad Streets where Bill Newhall was maimed, and where Frank Connor, Alex Berger, Harold Sherburne, and Jim Gezork lost their lives to an FALN bomb. Perhaps that will help AL GORE make up his mind.

Or perhaps AL GORE should ask his running mate, Senator JOE LIEBERMAN, how to stand up to Bill Clinton. Maybe Senator LIEBERMAN could convince his running mate to stand up for the rights of innocent Americans against those who perpetrate violence. Maybe then AL GORE can prevent the President from putting more American lives in jeopardy.

Mr. President, may I ask how much time I have remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

TO AUTHORIZE EXTENSION OF NONDISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is on H.R. 4444. The time is under control.

Who yields time?

Mr. HOLLINGS. Controlled time?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Six hours evenly divided.

AMENDMENT NO. 4134

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 4134.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 1 hour on this amendment equally divided.

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, I have tried, in my feeble ability here over the years, to get the Senate to pay attention to the lack of a competitive trade policy. I had hoped on this PNTR, permanent normal trade relations, with China that we might have a good debate with respect to our trade policy—whether or not the American people approve of it and whether there are some adjustments that should be made. Meanwhile our trade deficit goes up, up, and away.

I was a Senator here in the early 1980s when we had a positive balance of trade. I remember when it reached a $100 billion deficit in the balance of trade; and there were all kinds of headline articles back in the 1980s, that—Chicken Little—the sky was going to fall, and everything else like that.

Now we have been numbed. It has gone to $100, $200, $300 billion, and it approximates to a $400 billion deficit in the balance of trade. They don't even discuss it in the Presidential campaign. And they absolutely refuse to discuss it in the world's most deliberative body. They refuse to deliberate.

They bring a fixed bill to the floor. And it is terribly tough to talk to a fixed jury. But that is the way it is. The jury is fixed. The legislation is fixed. There are no amendments. We send this to the President.

The National Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable, the Conference Board and the National Association of Manufacturers are continuing their export of the industrial backbone of this Nation. Obviously, they make a bigger profit. They could care less about the country.

In fact, years back, the chairman of the board of Caterpillar said: We are not an American company, we are international.

Not long ago, earlier this year, the head of Boeing said: Oh no, we are not a United States company, we are an international company.

And the best of the best, Jack Welch of GE says: We are not going to buy