

of the President to modify or amend the executive order to which the provision refers.

Several provisions in the CAA make specified changes in statements of managers of the House-Senate conference committees that accompanied various bills reported from conference that ultimately became laws. As with other committee materials, statements of managers accompanying a conference report do not have the force of law. Accordingly, although changes to these statements are directed by the terms of the statute, the statements themselves are not legally binding.

George W. Bush

The White House,
January 23, 2004.

NOTE: H.R. 2673, approved January 23, was assigned Public Law No. 108–199. An original was not available for verification of the content of this statement. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Executive Order 13325— Amendment to Executive Order 12293, the Foreign Service of the United States

January 23, 2004

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended, and in order to adjust the basic salary rates for each class of the Senior Foreign Service in light of the changes made to the manner in which members of the Senior Executive Service will be paid pursuant to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004 (Public Law 108–136), it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Section 4 of Executive Order 12293 of February 23, 1981, as amended, is amended to read as follows:

“**Sec. 4.** (a) In accord with Section 402 of the Act (22 U.S.C. 3962), there are established the following salary classes with titles for the Senior Foreign Service, at the following ranges of basic rates of pay.

(1) Career Minister

Range from 94 percent of the rate payable to level III of the Executive Schedule to 100 percent of the rate payable to level III of the Executive Schedule.

(2) Minister-Counselor

Range from 90 percent of the rate payable to level III of the Executive Schedule to 100 percent of the rate payable to level III of the Executive Schedule.

(3) Counselor

Range from 120 percent of the rate payable to GS–15/Step 1 to 100 percent of rate payable to level III of the Executive Schedule.

(b) Upon conversion to a rate of basic pay within the range of rates established for the applicable salary class by this section as of the first day of the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2004, a member of the Senior Foreign Service shall receive the rate of basic pay to which he or she was entitled immediately before that date, including any locality-based comparability payment authorized under 5 U.S.C. 5304(h)(2)(C) that the member was receiving immediately before that date. On the same date, or on a later date specified by the Secretary of State (or the heads of the other agencies that utilize the Foreign Service personnel system (collectively the “Secretary”)), the Secretary may increase the member’s rate of basic pay upon a determination that the member’s performance or contribution to the mission of the agency so warrant and that the member is otherwise eligible for such a pay adjustment under Section 402 of the Foreign Service Act.”

Sec. 2. Effective Date. The salary rates contained herein are effective on the first day of the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2004.

George W. Bush

The White House,
January 23, 2004.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., January 27, 2004]

NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on January 28. This item was not

received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

January 24, 2004

Good morning. In my State of the Union Address, I spoke of a great priority for our Nation, to confront the rising cost of health care and make sure that more of our citizens can afford the health care they need. Health care costs are rising too fast for many families and businesses. It is time to address this problem directly, with five clear steps that Congress can take this year.

First, we can help control rising health care costs by cutting down on frivolous lawsuits against doctors and hospitals. When health care providers are responsible for injuries, they should be accountable. Yet no one was ever healed by a junk or frivolous lawsuit.

This week, I will travel to Little Rock, Arkansas, to visit Baptist Health Medical Center. For Baptist and other hospitals across the Nation, frivolous lawsuits have dramatically increased the cost of medical liability premiums. These costs are passed on to patients in higher bills. These costs are driving doctors from important work, such as delivering babies. And these costs are driving some doctors out of medicine entirely.

In order to protect the doctor-patient relationship, Congress should pass medical liability reform that removes the threat of frivolous lawsuits and the needless costs they impose on our health care system.

Second, we should help more small businesses afford health insurance for their workers by allowing these firms to band together and negotiate for lower insurance rates. These association health plans give small employers the same bargaining power as big companies, making it easier for them to provide employee health coverage. The House has passed a bill supporting these health plans, and the Senate needs to act.

Third, Congress should give lower income Americans refundable tax credits to help them purchase health insurance. These tax credits would total up to \$1,000 for individuals and \$3,000 for families. For many Amer-

icans lacking health insurance, these credits would make the difference between affording insurance and going without.

Fourth, we should help Americans with their health care costs by encouraging the use of health savings accounts. Congress passed these accounts last year in the Medicare bill, allowing people to save money for future medical expenses tax-free. People who make use of health savings accounts also will buy high-deductible insurance policies to protect them against catastrophic medical costs like hospitalization or major surgery. This year, I am urging Congress to make those premiums 100-percent tax deductible. This new deduction would strengthen health savings accounts and make health insurance more affordable for millions of Americans not covered through their workplace.

And fifth, we can control health care costs and improve care by moving American medicine into the information age. My budget for the coming year proposes doubling to \$100 million the money we spend on projects that use promising health information technology. This would encourage the replacement of handwritten charts and scattered medical files with a unified system of computerized records. By taking this action, we would improve care and help prevent dangerous medical errors, saving both lives and money.

In all these measures, we are upholding the basic principle that private health care and the sanctity of the doctor-patient relationship make America's health care the best in the world. And with the help of Congress, this year we will strengthen our private system of care by addressing the rising cost of health care and helping more Americans afford health coverage.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:20 a.m. on January 23 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 23 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.