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President Obama answers an acupuncturist: Missouri Town Hall Meeting April 29, 2009

Link to the transcription of the full content of the Town Hall Meeting:

http://www.ewsp.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7209:remarks-by-president-obama-in-arnold-missouri-town-hall-april-29-2009&catid=88888983:latest-national-news&Itemid=88889930

Q I'm a licensed acupuncturist and licensed massage therapist in Florissant. And so --

THE PRESIDENT: I could use one right now. (Laughter.) My back is stiff. I've been working hard.

Q I'll be happy to help you. (Laughter.) And this kind of fits into what you were just talking about as far as health care. I'm wondering, as a practitioner of Oriental medicine, knowing that the National Institutes of Health and the World Health Organization has discovered through their studies that alternative medicine often is more cost-effective and very effective, how will alternative medicine fit in your new health care program?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, look, my attitude is that we should -- we should do what works. So I think it is pretty well documented through scientific studies that acupuncture, for example, can be very helpful in relieving certain things like migraines and other ailments -- or at least as effective as more intrusive interventions.

I will let the science guide me. We just swore in an outstanding new Secretary of Health and Human Service, Kathleen Sebelius, former governor of Kansas. (Applause.) It's good to see that a Jay Hawk got applause on this side of the border here. (Laughter.) But she's going to do an outstanding job. And my charge to her is, as we're going through health care reform let's find out what works.

I think one basic principle that we know is that the more we do on the prevention side, the more we can obtain serious savings down the road. So giving children early checkups, making sure that they get immunized, making sure that they are diagnosed if they've got eyesight problems, making sure that they're taught proper nutrition to avoid a life of

obesity -- those are all issues that we have some control over. And if we're making those investments, we will save huge amounts of money in the long-term.

Unfortunately, the hardest thing to do in politics -- and certainly in health care reform -- has been to get policymakers to make investments early that will have long-term payoffs. Because people -- their attitude is, well, I'll be out of office by the time that kid grows up; and, the fact that they're healthy, that doesn't help me. And in the private sector insurance system, oftentimes insurers make the same calculation. Their attitude is, well, people change jobs enough for us to pay for the preventive medicine now when the problem may not crop up for another 20 years and they'll be long out of our system, so we don't want to reimburse it because it will make things more costly. That's the logic of our health care system that we're going to have to change.

The recovery package put a huge amount in prevention. We are, in our budget, calling for significant increases in prevention. And my hope is, is that working in a bipartisan fashion we are going to be able to get a health care reform bill on my desk before the end of the year that will start seeing the kinds of investments that will make everybody healthier. All right? (Applause)....