1987  Cutler graduates from Harvard University with a B.A. in economics.

1991  Cutler receives a Ph.D. in economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and joins the faculty at Harvard University.

1992  Cutler serves as economic advisor to the Clinton presidential campaign. 
      *(Washington Post, 03/30/1993)*

*November*  Clinton is elected the 42nd President of the United States.

1993  Cutler joins the Clinton administration as Senior Staff Economist on the Council of Economic Advisers (CEA) and Director of the National Economic Council (NEC).

*January*  Transition advisors tell Clinton that his campaign vision to overhaul health care will likely require significant tax hikes or price controls on virtually all medical services. This conclusion reportedly sets off a behind-the-scenes struggle among advisors over health care reform. *(Boston Globe, 05/24/1993)*

Clinton names Hillary Rodham Clinton to lead the Task Force on Health Care Reform, which includes six cabinet secretaries and a group of senior staff. Cabinet secretaries include: Les Aspin (Defense), Lloyd Bentsen (Treasury), Jesse Brown (Veterans Affairs), Ron Brown (Commerce), Robert Reich (Labor), and Donna Shalala (Health and Human Services). Staff includes: senior policy advisor Ira Magaziner, OMB Director Leon Panetta, OMB Deputy Director Alice Rivlin, and campaign health care transition team head Judith Feder. The task force’s plan is expected by the end of May. *(Washington Post, 01/26/1993)*

Ira Magaziner sends a memorandum to the task force stating that universal access could mean $30 to $90 billion of additional government expenditure by 1997. *(Washington Post, 02/22/1993)*

*March*  The Clinton administration is reportedly enmeshed in an internal struggle over whether to impose wage-and-price controls on the health care industry to curb costs. Clinton’s health advisers reportedly favor some controls, but members of the CEA and NEC are reportedly opposed to controls because of previous failures to curb costs by such means. *(Boston Globe, 03/21/1993)*
April

Task force officials release the main components of the health care reform plan, minus decisions on how to finance the program. The administration is considering limits on annual increases in premiums and short-term price controls as ways of controlling spending. (Washington Post, 04/10/1993)

May

As part of his final round of health care reform decisions, Clinton announces that universal coverage for standard medical procedures and preventive care will be the centerpiece of his plan. Clinton’s announcement implicitly rejects a limited benefits proposal favored by economic advisors in which benefits would increase over time. (Washington Post, 05/22/1993)

Clinton meets with economic advisors who reportedly raise questions about the cost and scope of the health-care plan being developed by the White House. Some advisors are reportedly concerned that a particularly comprehensive plan, the type favored by Hillary Rodham Clinton, would be too costly for the government and businesses. (New York Times, 05/22/1993)

Democrats reportedly encourage Clinton to wait to submit his health care plan to Congress until after the budget vote. Democrats and Republicans are in a protracted battle over Clinton’s first budget, which narrowly passes in August. (CQ Almanac 1993, p. 337; New York Times, 08/07/1993)

Clinton’s task force on health care reform formally disbands after developing a working plan for health care reform. (CQ Almanac 1994, p. 321)

August

The White House is finalizing its health care proposal. Administration economic advisors are reportedly concerned that the increased costs anticipated from the plan may cause some low-wage workers to lose their jobs. (New York Times, 08/30/1993)

September

Senior government officials reveal that Clinton’s health care reform plan will include long-term cost controls on health premiums and creation of a new structure for buying and selling health care services, which is intended to make health care providers more competitive and cost-efficient. The plan is considered an “unusual” combination of government regulation and market incentives. (Washington Post, 09/05/1993)

On the 22nd, President Clinton introduces his health care plan for universal coverage in a nationally televised address to a joint session of Congress. Critics of the plan claim it will cost the economy jobs. (CQ Almanac 1994, 321; New York Times, 08/30/1993)
October

Clinton formally submits his health care reform bill to Congressional leaders. Although Hillary Rodham Clinton had made “persuasive” appearances in front of Congressional committees, the momentum that had been building for the health care package begins to diminish as Congressional members demand more details about the plan and as foreign policy crises in Russia, Somalia, and Haiti occupy increasing attention. (CQ Almanac 1993, pp. 335-39; New York Times, 10/18/1993)

November

White House officials work hard to convince small business associations that the health care plan will help them economically. Small businesses are becoming increasingly opposed to the Clinton plan. (Washington Post, 11/01/1993)

On the 20th, Clinton’s health care reform bill is formally introduced in Congress and referred to three House and two Senate committees. The bill has 100 co-sponsors in the House and over 30 in the Senate. (Washington Post, 11/22/1993)

1994

Cutler rejoins the economics faculty at Harvard University.

January

In his State of the Union address, President Clinton pledges to veto any health care reform legislation that does not include universal coverage. (CQ Almanac 1994, p. 321)

June

Various Congressional committees hold hearings on health care reform. Committees are working to produce a health care bill based on the White House model. However, no committee is able to construct a bill that will garner enough support to pass its chamber while also meeting Clinton’s requirement for universal coverage. As a result, committee products are at best only building blocks for House and Senate Democratic leaders. (CQ Almanac 1994, p. 320)

July

Congressional leaders try to develop a viable health care bill offering universal coverage. However, by July 21, Congressional Democratic leaders formally tell Clinton that they have to back off from the sweeping health care overhaul he has envisioned. Ultimately, health care reform does not have enough votes in Congress to succeed. (CQ Almanac 1994, pp. 319-24, 348-55)

September

On the 26th, the health care reform plan officially dies in the 103rd Congress when Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-ME) informs Sen. John Chafee (R-RI) that there are not enough votes for a compromise measure. (CQ Almanac 1994, 321)

1995

While discussing his involvement with the health care reform effort Cutler tells reporters, “On balance, I’m happy I did it, but less for what it did for my standing than what it did for me personally. I learned a lot.” (The Washington Post, 06/08/1995)
Timelines

- David Cutler Timeline, prepared by Ryan Saylor, Miller Center, 07/25/2002.
- Clinton Administration Timeline, prepared by Robbie Robinson, Miller Center, 05/30/2002
Health Care Policy


- Dana Priest, “Putting Health Care Under a Microscope; In Clinical Detail, Clinton Task Force Analyzes and Argues Its Way Toward a Reform Plan,” Washington Post, 04/16/1993


News Articles

- David Wessel, “Clinton to Tap Top Economists For His Team,” *Wall Street Journal*, 01/11/1993

- Paul Hemp, “The M.I.T. Connection; University’s graduates dominate Clinton economic policy team,” *Boston Globe*, 01/24/1993

- Dana Priest, “Anonymity is Buzzword for Health ‘Worker Bees,’” *Washington Post*, 02/17/1993


Joining the Clinton Administration:

- How did you come to join the 1992 Clinton presidential campaign?
- What were your primary responsibilities as economic adviser to the campaign?
- How did Clinton’s economic policies develop over the course of the campaign?
- Selection as Senior Staff Economist on the Council of Economic Advisers and the National Economic Council. What kind of discussions and understandings did you have with the President and others about your role? How did you view your role?

Economic Policy:

- Serving as liaison between the Council of Economic Advisers and the National Economic Council. What were your day-to-day activities like? Relationships with CEA Director Laura D’Andrea Tyson, NEC Director Robert Rubin, NEC Deputy Director Gene Sperling, and other key figures.

The President’s Task Force on National Health Care Reform:

- Organization and functioning of the task force. Your responsibilities on the task force. Impact of other legislative initiatives, especially the budget, on health care reform. Relationship with Hillary Rodham Clinton, Ira Magaziner, and other key figures. What was President Clinton’s level of involvement?

- Health care issues. Compromising between market-oriented and government-centered reform. Importance of universal coverage to President Clinton and to you.

Retrospective:

- Why do you think health care reform failed to pass Congress? Were there features of the effort overlooked or misunderstood by the press?

- Strengths and weaknesses of the Clinton Administration. Assessment of the Clinton record on health care and economics. How should the Clinton presidency be viewed in history?