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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 22, 1975

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR: WARREN RUSTAND
FROM: JERRY H. JONES 
SUBJECT: Michigan State Senator
Robert Vander Laan

Your memorandum to the President of May 20 on the above subject has been reviewed and the following notation was made:

-- Set up meeting with State Senator
VanderLaan (15 minutes).

Please follow-up with the appropriate action.

Thank you.

cc: Don Rumsfeld
Jim Connor

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

George J. Waver R

Set up meeting
with that Smith
Vanderham. (15 minutes)

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 20, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
VIA: JERRY JOHNSON
FROM: WARREN RUSTAND
SUBJECT: Michigan State Senator Robert Vander Laan

The attached letter is forwarded for the President's reading file.

Thank you.

admission

THE SENATE
LANSING, MICHIGAN

THIRTY-FIRST DISTRICT
ROBERT VANDER LAAN
POST OFFICE BOX 240
LANSING, MICHIGAN 48902

ASSISTANT MINORITY LEADER
COMMITTEES:
SENATE BUSINESS
STATE AFFAIRS
CONSERVATION

May 14, 1975

TO	OFFICE
SECRETARY'S OFFICE	
DATE RECEIVED	
MAY 19 1975	
MESSAGE	
SPEAKERS BUREAU	
OTHER	
APPOINTMENT OFFICE	

The Honorable Gerald R. Ford
President of the United States
White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you personally for your assistance in referring my name to officials in the Department of Transportation. The relationship we established was a very good one. The meetings and phone calls which we had were cordial and the position we discussed and which, tentatively, was offered was extremely tempting. I felt it a distinct honor to be considered for this type of responsible position.

At this time, however, I felt that I was not free to accept the position and the letter to Mr. David McCarthy so indicates. In that letter I point out that I am still seriously considering the possibility of again being a candidate for the Fifth Congressional office. I am aware that many people from the fifth district have discussed the prior campaigns, and undoubtedly the pending campaign in 1976, with you or members of your staff.

Needless to say, the outcome of the special election in February 1974 was a shock to the Republican party, to the citizens in the fifth district, and to the members of the congressional delegation from Michigan. I am also aware of the fact that you too were shocked by the outcome. Also, certainly, the jolt was as great or greater to me than to anyone else, although I had realized prior to the election that it was becoming an uphill battle.

For my part, personally, I refrained from discussing the campaign publicly ..the outcome of it..the results of it..in the heat of the aftermath of defeat. I also refused to engage in public debate or public recrimination of the Selection Committee and the activities which occurred in the fall campaign, being of the opinion that anything that was said would only further diminish the chances of a Republican victory.

(Cont'd)

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This was a difficult position for me to take in light of the fact that numerous people who were either unhappy with my candidacy in the first place, or were somewhat relieved that I didn't win, were "beating a path" to the Governor's office, the office of the state chairman in Michigan, and to the White House indicating that they had a candidate who surely could win and who, undoubtedly, should have been the candidate in the special election and should be the candidate for the general election in November.

It is regrettable that some of the chief critics of our campaign, and some who were lukewarm at best or actually supportive of Congressman VanderVeen, were the first to offer themselves and their candidates as potential victors for the November election, and subsequent elections.

I have been active in the Republican party since 1948 and have supported Republican candidates. I did engage in primary battles and, of course, had my choice among candidates in the primaries. But when the primary was over, it was my position that at that time it was our job and duty to elect the Republican candidate. This was my position, although at times I was not one hundred percent happy with the particular candidate or his views, and I never allowed that to interfere with my support of his candidacy....If I made a mistake I guess it was that of assuming that all Republicans acted this way. I did learn from this experience that not everyone who says he is a Republican comes through when the going gets tough.

Again, needless to say, that if all the individuals in the fifth district who were active politically in the past, or who claimed to be concerned Republicans, had exhibited the interest and enthusiasm and dedication which you exhibited in both the special election (in which I ran) and the November election (in which Paul Goebel ran)..we would find the fifth congressional seat safely in the Republican camp today.

In the letter which I wrote to the Department of Transportation indicating that I did not feel I could accept an appointment there at this time, I also indicated that I was again seriously considering entering the Fifth Congressional race. This decision was based on two considerations. First, I do not feel that the election in February was a personal defeat, but primarily a defeat based on the national climate and Watergate situation which was beyond my control.

Secondly, the Detroit Market Opinion Research firm has taken four polls in Kent County in the past two years. Bob Teeter, director of the firm, and I have gone over the results of these polls numerous times and very carefully.

(Cont'd)

His opinion is, both publicly and privately, that of all the potential candidates in the fifth district, my candidacy was the strongest one prior to the special election, would have been the strongest in the November election and, at the present time, still is the strongest on the horizon for the 1976 election.

The poll indicates, and I understand that you discussed this with Mr. Russell and Mr. Gordon on one occasion, that my awareness factor in the county is higher than any other political candidate, including Congressman VanderVeen. Also, that my favorable rating is higher than any other potential candidate, including the incumbent.

I do understand that events and time change and can mold public opinion and that in a year or two years a candidate can slip in both the above factors. I am convinced, however, that the present congressman does not reflect the thinking of the majority of the voters in the Fifth Congressional District. I am equally convinced that if the issues can be clearly stated, and the Republican candidate is an acceptable candidate, this district can be retaken by a Republican.

I am aware that there are weighty and important matters which the President of the United States must bear. This realization (although I was aware of it before) was dramatically brought home to me when you became president. Millie and I, and the entire family, now look at every major decision you must make in an altogether different light and are constantly amazed at the courage and stamina with which you face these issues. We would like to assure you that we have the concern of our nation at heart and are just a little more confident now that you are President. We assure you also that you are constantly in our prayers, realizing that the task you have is an almost unbearable one.

In light of all that has transpired, however, I would like to request a few moments of your time when I could discuss with you, personally and very briefly, the events of the past campaigns and the future of the Fifth Congressional District. I have opportunity to be in Washington on frequent occasions and, with your permission, would like to contact your staff and set up a brief but, I think, important meeting to discuss the events I have referred to in this letter.

Again, my personal 'thank you' for the support which you have given me over the past years when I have been active in Republican politics. I

(Cont'd)

May 14, 1975

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especially thank you for the word which you placed with the Department of Transportation on my behalf and for the response which I received from them.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bob".

Robert VanderLaan
Senator-31st. District

RV/lk

Enc:

THE SENATE
LANSING, MICHIGAN.

THIRTY-FIRST DISTRICT
ROBERT VANDER LAAN
POST OFFICE BOX 240
LANSING, MICHIGAN 48902

ASSISTANT MINORITY LEADER
COMMITTEES:
SENATE BUSINESS
STATE AFFAIRS
CONSERVATION

May 14, 1975

Mr. David McCarthy, Special Assistant
to the Deputy Undersecretary
U. S. Department of Transportation
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. McCarthy:

I would like to thank you for the time that you, the undersecretary, and other personnel in the Department of Transportation, spent with me, and the consideration you gave me, regarding the possibility of my being appointed to the position in Intergovernmental Affairs within the Department of Transportation.

The opportunity was both promising and tempting. I have, however, considered the responsibilities which I have in the Michigan Senate at this time, as well as the possibility of again being a candidate for Congress from the Fifth Congressional District, and am of the opinion that it would be unwise for me to pursue further or to accept a position within your department at the present time.

I assure you that the position was one in which I was very interested, and one which I felt qualified to fill. There is a strong possibility that at some future date this might be just the type of position that I would very much like to fill.

Again, may I thank you for the personal attention which you gave the matter, and I would request that you convey these feelings to the undersecretary and other personnel in the department with whom I talked.

Sincerely yours,

Robert VanderLaan
Senator-31st. District

RV/1k