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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

THE PRESIDENT'S BRIEFING BOOK

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

RHODE ISLAND MEDIA
THE WHITE HOUSE
May 28, 1976



RHODE ISLAND
ISSUES AND GUIDANCE

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RHODE ISLAND -- ISSUES AND GUIDANCE

I. THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND

- A. At 10:30 a.m. (Friday, May 28th) your candidacy will be endorsed by the Republican leadership in Rhode Island. They include: The PFC Chairman, Providence Mayor Vincent A. Cianci, Jr. (Buddy); Cranston Mayor James L. Taft, Jr. (candidate for Governor); former Governor John H. Chafee (candidate for the United States Senate); and Americo Campanella, Republican State Chairman. The press conference in Rhode Island will take place at 10:30 a.m. in Mayor Cianci's office, and you should acknowledge in your remarks to the Rhode Island media your appreciation for their warm endorsement.
- B. You may be asked what you think Chafee's and Taft's chances are for winning the Senate seat and Governorship respectively. You should certainly call them both very strong contenders and should mention the fact that neither one of them is running against an incumbent. Both races have been targeted by the Republican National Committee and both Chafee and Taft are extremely popular in Rhode Island. Chafee is a former three-term Governor and former Secretary of the Navy; Taft is a former Minority Leader of the State Senate, is in the middle of his second term as the Mayor of the City of Cranston, and is a past president of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns.
- C. Cianci should be recognized as a very able young leader. He is the first Republican Mayor in 38 years in Providence, and on top of that, won as a Republican in a very Democratic city. You should stress what a good job Cianci is doing as your PFC Chairman. You also should stress the fact that the members of the Rhode Island House and the Senate have expressed support of your candidacy and you should compliment House Minority Leader Frederick Lippitt and Senate Minority Leader Lila Sapinsley for their support and the support of their respective caucuses.
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D. Italian elections are going to be held soon. The Reagan people held a press conference Thursday (5/27) in Rhode Island saying that Reagan was very concerned about the Communists taking over control in Italy. Rhode Island is heavily Catholic (68%) and has a huge Italian-American population. You should stand as a strong supporter of Italy.

POINTS TO HIGHLIGHT

1. You should stress by your conduct during the interview, your openness, candidness and honesty, and indicate that you have restored these qualities to the Oval Office. This is a big issue for Rhode Island voters. The state has generally been politically active and at times corrupt. John Chafee is well known as "The Man You Can't Trust" and your reputation as an honest and candid person sits well with Rhode Island Republicans.
2. Your support of General Revenue Sharing -- Revenue sharing means a great deal to a depressed economic area like Rhode Island. You should make the point that passage of your revenue sharing bill will provide Rhode Island with \$114,814,196 in additional revenue. It may make a headline story.

MAJOR ISSUES

1. The economy.
2. Can you beat Reagan and, in fact, beat a Democratic candidate in November?
3. Your position on jobs. The Rhode Island unemployment rate is much higher than the National average. (11.8 percent in Rhode Island; 7.5 percent Nationally, as of March 1976.) In Rhode Island it's pretty fashionable to support programs that create jobs. You may be asked why you do not support the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment Bill.
4. Your veto of the Public Works bill.
5. Big government. Reagan has been circulating a letter



stressing his opposition to big government and you should talk about what you've done in that area.

6. Crime. Rhode Island has a high crime rate, and any kind of law enforcement talk is worth hitting.
7. Federal Judgeship. Federal Judge Edward Day has recently retired. There is now an opening and there are several leading contenders including Sitting Superior Judge Joseph R. Weisberger and former two-term Republican Attorney General and unsuccessful candidate for Governor Herbert F. DeSimone. (DeSimone is the local favorite for the spot among Party people.)
8. Federal Building. Mayor Cianci has lobbied long and hard for a Federal Building for the City of Providence. It is probably not a possibility, and has been tied up in OMB. You should be careful not to say that the building is not possible at this time.
9. James Nugent, the Reagan Chairman in Rhode Island, was recently replaced as a civilian aide to the Secretary of the Army. If the question of political vendetta against him comes up, you should vote that the job is a secretarial appointment within the Department of the Army. It has nothing to do with politics, and the Army traditionally rotates these civilian aides.
10. Nuclear Power Plant. Plans for construction of a nuclear power plant were recently turned down by the voters of Charlestown in Southern Rhode Island. The referendum was very close and created a swirling controversy.
11. Naval Cutbacks. President Nixon broke a campaign promise and closed nearly all the major naval installations in Rhode Island. There is now talk of even further cutbacks.

Those cutbacks, according to the Defense Department, are still under review. But more important they do not involve the major naval functions now in Rhode Island -- The Naval Schools Command, the Naval Communications Station, or the Naval Underwater Systems Center. (The units under review are the Defense Mapping Agency Topographic Field Office, which employs 200 people; the Defense Support Activity, which handles



property disposal and employs 39 people; and the Torpedo activity of the Naval Underwater Systems Center--number of employees not immediately available). You can state categorically that the major naval activities in Rhode Island will not be closed.

HJF/JBS/5-27-76

