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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
UPON SIGNING AMENDMENTS TO H.R. 69
THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

2:15 P.M. EDT

Secretary Carlucci, distinguished administrators and employees of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, my former colleagues in the House and the Senate, fellow Americans:

It is really a great privilege and pleasure for me to be here. I know that all of us wish Secretary Weinberger were here, but he is off on a very important responsibility, and I am sure he is here in spirit, if not person.

I suspect this is the first Federal aid to education bill that has ever been signed by a left-handed President. I attach no significance to that, but it was difficult with a person with a short name to use so many pens. (Laughter)

President Eisenhower once said in discussing education, and I quote, "The Federal role should be merely to facilitate, never to control education."

Now, striking the right balance between helping on the one hand and dominating on the other is never an easy task. And those of you who participated in the preparation of the submission in the first instance to the Congress and those of you who have labored so hard in both the House and the Senate to find a balance in 1974 in my judgment all deserve a great deal of commendation and congratulation.

I don't think any one faction or any one party dictated the contents of that very substantial and very important piece of legislation. I know from some personal experience on the periphery, when I was in the House and subsequently as Vice President, how much hard work, how many long hours, how many compromises were made between, in the first instance, the Legislative and the Executive branches and between various points of view, legitimate, well-motivated, differences philosophically.

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I don't believe anyone who labored so long and so hard would say this is a perfect piece of legislation, but I think it is a good law, it justified the final action by the Congress, and it fully justified my signature representing approval by the Executive branch.

It does provide, in my opinion, for a more effective distribution of Federal funds to help elementary and secondary schools so that our Federal tax dollars can be more appropriately and efficiently and economically utilized to improve education throughout our 50 States.

The legislation also provides for better Federal administration of the various programs under the more or less direct control of Federal officials, and this better management of Federal programs will help States and localities so they will have a better and more effective input into the management of these Federal programs.

I think it is fair to say that this legislation places reasonable and equitable restrictions upon the problem of busing, and in conjunction with the Supreme Court decision will hopefully relieve that problem and make the solution far more equitable and just.

It is my judgment that H.R. 69 represents the kind of an approach that in this day and age we must follow if we are to do the right thing in education, in housing and in a multitude of other highly essential programs for the benefit of our country as a whole.

This legislation itself does represent the way to solve disagreements, but if we approach other problems as we have approached this one, with candor on the one hand, cooperation on another, compromise on a third, I think we can march together, the Executive, the Legislative, Democrats, Republicans, liberals and conservatives in working together to make our country what we all want it to be, a better America.

Thank you very kindly.

END (AT 2:20 P.M. EDT)