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Office of the White House Press Secretary
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THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I have signed S. 782, the "Antitrust Procedures and Penalties Act," which will strengthen significantly antitrust laws and the ability to enforce them.

This legislation is the first major reform of the Nation's antitrust laws in nearly twenty years. It changes such antitrust violations of the Sherman Act as price fixing from misdemeanors to felonies; increases the maximum sentence from one year to three years; and raises maximum allowable fines from \$50,000 to \$1 million for corporations and from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for individuals.

In my Economic Message to the Congress on October 8, 1974, I called for legislation which would give us the tools to fight inflation. Increased penalties, as those in S. 782, are some of those tools.

The bill also amends the Expediting Act permitting appeals of civil antitrust cases directly to the Supreme Court only upon a finding of the district court that the case is of national economic importance. This will halt the practice of clogging the Supreme Court docket by taking all antitrust appeals directly to that tribunal, thus denying it the wisdom and advice of the U. S. Circuit Courts of Appeals.

Finally, S. 782 provides for closer scrutiny and greater participation by the public in the consent decree process. This is used by the Government in the pre-trial settlement of its civil antitrust cases.

The time is long overdue for making violations of the Sherman Act a serious crime, because of the extremely adverse effect which they have on the country and its economy. S. 782 will provide a significant deterrent to potential violators and will give the courts sufficient flexibility to impose meaningful sanctions. Moreover, the bill will serve the public interest by expediting cases that have a profound influence on American industrial organization and allowing the courts to do other important work at the same time.

I called for further antitrust legislation in my October message, and I hope that the new Congress will carry that forward. It includes an amendment to the Antitrust Civil Process Act allowing the Department of Justice to take testimony in antitrust investigations -- as the Federal Trade Commission has done for years -- rather than simply relying on routine document subpoenas.

This Congress has recognized that antitrust violations injure both our economy and individual consumers, and I commend it on enacting S. 782. I assure you that with this new legislation, this Administration will continue to create a strong antitrust record. In times like these, we cannot afford to do less.

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