

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

APRIL 17, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT
TO THREE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

April 17, 1975

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In the interest of protecting the American consumer, I am directing department and agency heads, in coordination with the Domestic Council, to review Executive branch procedures to make certain that consumer interests receive full consideration in all Government actions.

To be frank, I recognize the legitimate public and Congressional concerns that departments and agencies be more responsive to the interests of consumers. This must be changed. Therefore, I am asking agency heads to examine the specific efforts they are making now to represent the consumer in their agencies' decisions and activities and to work with Virginia Knauer, my Special Assistant for Consumer Affairs, in instituting additional efforts which the agencies can undertake to better represent consumer interests.

In examining their present procedures and in establishing new ones, department and agency heads will follow these guidelines:

All consumer interests should receive a fair chance to be heard in the Government decision making process; and

The costs and administrative requirements of Federal rules and regulations on the private sector should be held to a minimum.

Regulatory reform is one of the most important vehicles for improving consumer protection. Outdated regulatory practices lead to higher prices and reduced services. I urge the Congress to enact a number of specific legislative proposals in this regard, including the bill I submitted in January to establish a Regulatory Review Commission. I renew my request to the Congress to repeal outdated fair trade laws which raise prices and to reform many of the existing banking laws and regulations which penalize small savers. I will soon request legislation to overhaul our system of transportation regulation to allow freer competition, improved services, and lower prices.

I also intend to ask the chairmen and members of the independent regulatory agencies to meet with me to discuss ways they can make immediate improvements in the regulatory process. I am determined that the public will receive the most efficient and effective public service at the least cost.

In view of the steps that are being taken by the Executive department to make Government-wide improvements in the quality of service to the consumer, I am requesting that the Congress postpone further action on S. 200, which would create a new Federal Agency for Consumer Advocacy.

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I do not believe that we need yet another Federal bureaucracy in Washington, with its attendant costs of \$60 million for the first three years and hundreds of additional Federal employees, in order to achieve better consumer representation and protection in Government. At a time when we are trying to cut down on both the size and the cost of Government, it would be unsound to add another layer of bureaucracy instead of improving the underlying structure.

It is my conviction that the best way to protect the consumer is to improve the existing institutions of Government, not to add more Government.

I look forward to working with you, the members of your Committee, and the Congress in advancing the interests of all consumers within our existing departments and agencies.

Sincerely,

GERALD R. FORD

The Honorable Abraham A. Ribicoff
Chairman
Senate Government Operations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Brooks
Chairman
House Government Operations Committee
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Harley O. Staggers
Chairman
House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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