

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 27, 1972

Dear Jerry:

I want to comment on some recent Congressional actions attaching Vietnam riders to the foreign aid bills. I want to appeal to the Congress' sense of responsibility before irreparable damage is done.

The riders themselves threaten to delay peace in Vietnam by undermining our current efforts to negotiate a settlement. Attaching these divisive riders threatens essential policies and programs of this Government which are vital to our national interests and international responsibilities in the Middle East, in Asia, in Europe, and elsewhere.

Now first, with respect to Vietnam and the various improvised amendments which prescribe specific negotiating positions, I will not presume to quarterback the motives underlying these actions which are not necessarily partisan. It is important, however, that all keep in mind that (1) there are serious and delicate negotiations underway in Paris, and (2) we have made steady progress during the past three years in reducing US involvement in Vietnam in the absence of a settlement.

These resolutions cannot help the negotiations which we are conducting. They could seriously jeopardize them by removing incentives for the other side to negotiate and confusing the other side about our real terms. I recognize that there are differing views on how best to bring about the end to this war. But I am also conscious that the responsibility for doing so is above all mine, and I intend to carry out this obligation in a responsible way. Unilateral resolutions and disabling amendments to authorization or appropriation bills which deprive me of the flexibility to do so, cannot be the sound course. They will only serve to delay the end of the war by hampering the efforts for peace now being made.

The amendments are all the more precipitate because these issues will be the subject of a national debate prior to the election in November. Therefore, I can only urge all members of the legislature to carefully consider their voting record and bear in mind the responsibility that rests heavily on their shoulders.

Second, with respect to the foreign assistance and defense procurement bills:

We now face the situation that these riders threaten foreign aid and procurement funding. They thus jeopardize the whole conduct of our national security policy. They threaten defense programs that are essential to our own national security. They threaten also programs that support the security and well-being of our friends around the world. The Nixon Doctrine is meant as a new role for the United States, preserving our world interests less by direct involvement and more by supporting the efforts of others.

Without these continuing programs, our friends and our interests -- in the Middle East, for example -- are left high and dry. What alternative foreign policy do these opponents of US defense and assistance propose?

If the Congress wants to undertake greater responsibilities in the field of foreign affairs, it should start by showing a sense of responsibility in fulfilling the important duties it now has.

I am sending identical letters to other bipartisan leaders.

With warm regard,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Richard Nixon". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "Richard Nixon".

Honorable Gerald R. Ford  
Minority Leader  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515