

The original documents are located in Box 63, folder “12/12/75 - To Bo Callaway - Recommendations on Handling of Bill Signings/Vetoes (Common Situs, Energy, Concentration of Power, Anti-Bigness)” of the Robert Teeter Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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December 12, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR:

BO CALLAWAY

FROM:

BOB TEETER *RT*

SUBJECT:

Bill Signing/Vetoes

With three tough bill-signings or vetoes coming up, it is critical that the President realize whatever advantages there are in the positions he takes on each of these three issues. One of the problems over the past few weeks is that when the President takes a position or action, he seems to lose ground with not only the groups who are opposed to that action, but those who favor it. Clearly, this was the case with New York. The President is being perceived as having bailed New York out when he said he wouldn't, and is not getting any advantage for having forced more changes and reforms to take place than almost anyone possible.

Unless we are careful, this is going to be the case with the common situs and energy bills. If he vetoes common situs, the unions are going to be mad and the business people are not going to be particularly happy because they had to fight so hard to turn him around when they thought he should have been on their side from the beginning. If he does veto it, it has got to be done with an interpretation of how his veto will help individual citizens (keeping the price of housing down, and helping rejuvenate the construction industry) and not because he is anti-union or pro big-business. It may, however, be an opportunity to take a crack at big unions and a way to prevent the over-concentration of power in big unions.

If he signs the energy bill, it has got to be done with the interpretation of accomplishing some of the things he has proposed while helping the consumer by holding prices down during economic recovery. And it is also an opportunity to take a crack at the big oil companies who everybody dislikes. This would also provide some balance to the anti-union interpretation of a common situs veto. The key, in my opinion, to the anti-bigness or concentration of power theme, is balance. It can't look like he is using this idea as a means to go after one group more than the other. The President needs to be perceived as being against the concentration of power whether it is in big government, big unions, or big business.

He also needs to be careful when taking on the unions not to become anti-"the working man". While only slightly more than half of those who make their living by manual labor belong to unions, many of them identify with union causes.



We also need to get commitments for the active, vocal support of those who agree with what the President does on these bills after he acts. Whatever position he takes, there are groups and individuals who will support and interpret positively what he did.

In summary, we are not getting any political advantage from the positions the President is already taking and have got to begin to do so now. This is not achieved by interpreting every action as a middle-to-moderate position which results in everybody thinking you are not doing enough for them, but rather by doing something that will make a group of citizens happy and add them to the constituency. The people who are opposed to the action are going to be mad regardless of the explanation.