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## THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 5, 1975

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM:           RON NESSEN *RNN*

SUBJECT:        Jerry Lewis letter to Mrs. Ford concerning  
                  muscular dystrophy telethon

I believe it would be a very bad precedent to bring White House pressure on an individual television station to carry a specific program, no matter how worthy the cause. Therefore I don't believe you or Mrs. Ford, or even the Press Secretary, should contact the Detroit TV station directly.

At the very maximum I believe Sheila Weidenfeld could contact the station and indicate in a very low-key way Mrs. Ford's interest in the success of the muscular dystrophy program. Sheila, however, should not directly urge the station to carry the telethon.

Perhaps a preferable way would be for Mrs. Ford to write a letter to Jerry Lewis wishing him success on the muscular dystrophy telethon and expressing hope that as many stations as possible will broadcast it. Then he could use that letter in a very indirect way to persuade the Detroit station to broadcast the telethon.

cc: Sheila Weidenfeld

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Ron Nixon

This came to Betty  
from Jerry Lewis. He is  
National Honorary Ch.

Should we call Lewis  
if so who should do it?

*Jerry Lewis*

April 29, 1975

Mrs. Gerald R. Ford  
The White House  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mrs. Ford:

MDA is faced with a terribly serious problem in connection with its Labor Day Telethon this year which you alone might be instrumental in solving. I hope you won't mind my turning to you for help, but I know your interest in the cause represented by the Association vastly transcends the word "Honorary" in your title, and that you've worked hard and long to make our program a success on the local level.

MDA is now dependent upon the Telethon for more than half the funds necessary to do its job. If that job is going to be done more effectively -- and it has to be -- then the Telethon has got to become more effective. Now that the show reaches virtually every major population center in the nation, about the only way remaining to make it more effective is to get it carried by TV stations which command greater audiences than the ones which have carried the show in the past.

In an effort to accomplish that, we switched some stations this year and, as a result, found ourselves shut out of Detroit.

Continued...

We're at an impasse there which -- if not overcome -- could result in a loss to the Association of over a million dollars. As you know, that's a million dollars in scientific research to save lives, and in clinics and camps to help "my kids" lead lives as fulfilling as possible despite their disabilities -- so you can see how desperate the situation is.

The station on which we feel we'd have our best chance in Detroit is WJBK-TV, whose Vice President and General Manager, Larry Carino, I understand, is a friend of yours. The people at MDA have been talking to Larry for weeks and he seems generally receptive to the idea of carrying the show, but stops short of a commitment because of a long-standing "no telethon policy" maintained by his station.

If you could possibly let Larry know of your personal concern about MDA and its goals, and urge him not to let "policy" stand in the way of his helping hundreds of thousands of stricken kids and adults, I think it would be the "clincher." Your doing so would mean more to me than I can ever say -- but, even more important, it could mean the world to all those for whom MDA is the main or only hope.

Continued...

Again, I'm sorry to burden you with one more request for help to add to the mountain with which I know you're already faced, but I don't know where else to turn. Can you help us? Please let me know.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joseph P. Kennedy". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the text "Most sincerely,".

National Chairman  
Muscular Dystrophy  
Association, Inc.

JL:jt

810 Seventh Avenue  
New York, N.Y. 10019

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