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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON


November 7, 1975

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR:

JAMES T. LYNN

FROM:

JAMES E. CONNOR 

SUBJECT:

Legislation to Establish a National
Women's Conference in 1976

Confirming a phone call to your office this morning, the President has reviewed your memorandum of October 30 on the above subject and has approved the following:

Option #2 -- Support the bill, if amended to delay the conference beyond 1976 and lower the authorization

Please follow-up with the appropriate action.

cc: Dick Cheney

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

November 5, 1975

MR PRESIDENT:

The attached memorandum was staffed to Messrs. Baroody, Buchen, Cannon, Friedersdorf, Hartmann, Marsh, Scowcroft and Seidman. They all concur in OMB's recommendation of Option 2.

Mr. Hartmann added the following comment:
"Option 2, but if it does not prevail go ahead and sign the bill. I agree with non-D.C. site idea."

Jim Connor



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

ACTION

OCT 30 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

JAMES T. LYNN

SUBJECT:

Legislation to establish a
National Women's Conference
in 1976

We need your decision regarding the Administration's position on legislation (H.R. 9924--Rep. Abzug and 21 others) to establish a National Women's Conference in 1976. This bill is, in effect, a follow-up to International Women's Year, 1975. It was brought up on the House floor on October 20 under suspension of the rules, but failed to receive the needed votes (233 yeas to 157 nays). It is now scheduled to come before the House Rules Committee on November 5 and, if a rule is granted, to come to the House floor the following week.

I. BACKGROUND

Last January, by Executive Order 11832, you established the National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year, 1975, to promote national observance of International Women's Year (IWY). The Executive order provides for the Commission to conclude its work by the end of 1975, report to the President thirty days later, and then terminate.

The House bill would (a) extend the life of the Commission and direct that it convene a National Women's Conference in 1976; (b) provide for assistance to preparatory State or regional conferences; (c) require a Commission report to the President and Congress within 120 days after the conference, and a report by the President to Congress within 120 additional days containing recommendations on the Commission's report; (d) provide for planning of a follow-up National Women's Conference in 1985; and (e) authorize appropriations of up to \$10 million.

On September 30, Ms. Jill Ruckelshaus, Presiding Officer of the Commission, presented uncleared testimony before the House subcommittee (copy at Tab A). While expressing some questions and reservations on timing and procedures, she indicated that the Commission "supports the intent and spirit of the bill...."

II. OPTIONS

The options are to:

- (1) Oppose the bill.
- (2) Support the bill, if amended to delay the conference beyond 1976 and lower the authorization.
- (3) Defer to Congress, while expressing reservations as to timing and authorization level.

Considerations--National conferences usually result in far-ranging recommendations which are difficult to oppose but impossible to endorse in their entirety. A National Women's Conference would generate particular pressure in a Presidential election year.

Support for a conference for one purpose, however worthy, would set a precedent, making it difficult to oppose pressures for other conferences.

The \$10 million in Federal funding is high compared to similar national conferences (\$3 million or less). Cost was the main criticism of the bill on the House floor.

On the other hand, none of the current activities in this area can provide the national visibility of the problems and goals of women in our society as could a National Women's Conference. Such a conference could also serve to sustain the momentum of IWY, and generate additional support for the Equal Rights Amendment. Opposition to H.R. 9924 could be interpreted as indicating a lack of interest in women's rights.

Support of the bill, which is likely to be enacted, would give the Administration part of the credit. It might also provide leverage in obtaining amendments to delay the conference date beyond 1976 and lower the authorization level.

To mitigate the precedential problem, a mid-ground position would be to defer to Congress as to the effectiveness of the proposed conference in achieving its purpose, but indicating no objection if the Congress decides in the affirmative. This position could also include recommendations for delay of the conference until 1977 and for a lower authorization.

Agency views:

-- State, HUD, and the Commission on Civil Rights support the objectives of the proposal.

-- HEW recommends against a White House Conference on the grounds that its purposes are already being met by a variety of activities in the Federal Government and that the \$10 million authorization is inconsistent with your "no new spending" policy.

-- the Civil Service Commission expresses "some reservations as to whether a congressionally-mandated national conference...represents the best expenditure of funds in pursuit of the broad objectives of the bill."

III. RECOMMENDATION

That you approve Option 2--support the bill if amended to delay the conference beyond 1976 and lower the authorization to \$3 million.

Mrs. Lindh also favors Option 2 and urges that, if the legislation is enacted, the conference be held at a site other than Washington, preferably in the Midwest.

Option #1

Option #2

Option #3

See me _____

TAB
A

Testimony of Jill Ruckelshaus
Presiding Officer of the National Commission
on the Observance of International Women's Year, 1975
on HR 8903

Before the Subcommittee on Government Information
and Individual Rights, Government Operations Committee,
House of Representatives, September 30, 1975

Congresswoman Abzug and Members of the Committee:

The Commission is indeed honored by your request for our testimony and by the confidence you have placed in us in HR 8903, a bill to direct "the National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year, 1975, to organize and convene a National Women's Conference, and for other purposes."

My testimony today reflects the views of my Commission. H.R. 8903 was discussed with Commission members in attendance at our meeting on August 29 by your able assistant, Lee Novick. Last week we asked all our members for views and comments by mail.

All who were available approved of the bill in principle; a few had questions or reservations about timing or procedures. The general reaction seemed to be that the conferences proposed by the bill are important to carrying forward the momentum of International Women's Year and to bringing about a decade of development. They will be a very logical extension of the work of the Commission and an unparalleled opportunity for publicizing our report (or reports) and establishing priorities for implementation of our recommendations.

Some of our Members and staff also stressed that many women have been newly attracted to women's issues through International Women's Year and other developments and that the conferences would provide further outreach to them and opportunity for involvement.

The Commission, therefore, supports the intent and spirit of the bill, and I want to compliment you, Congresswoman Abzug, and your colleagues for the initiative you have taken in introducing the bill and the care with which you have drafted it.

I would like to present a few suggestions for amendment and some questions for your consideration. We are not necessarily asking that answers to the questions we are raising be spelled out in the bill or in the Committee Report, but we would like to have some expression of views from you and your colleagues, as well as the women's organizations who are testifying.

1. Unless the bill is passed very quickly and an appropriation authorized, it will be difficult to hold 50 State conferences climaxed by a national conference with a deadline of December 31, 1976. The summer months are generally not good for holding conferences, and in the fall months prior to the election many of the women who should be planning and participating in the State conferences will be actively engaged in political campaigns.

Our members do, however, recognize that the conferences will have greater impact if they are held prior to the November election, and if the bill passed early enough some of the conferences could possibly be held in the Spring. Would it be acceptable to leave the way open to holding some of the State conferences and/or the national conference in early 1977?

2. The bill mentions "regional" and "local" conferences in Section 4(1) and (2). In Section 1(3) the bill states "a national conference of American women, preceded by State conferences, is the most suitable mechanism by which such an evaluation of the status of women and issues of concern to them can be effected." We agree that a national conference preceded by State conferences is the most feasible method of accomplishing the bill's objectives and recommend that the words "local" and "regional" be eliminated in the other sections, with the understanding that if it seems desirable in any State to do so, the "State conference" could consist of a series of local conferences that would cover the entire state.

3. Where should the national conference be held? From the staff's point of view, it would be most efficient and less expensive to hold it in Washington. However, from the standpoint of facilities, press coverage, and

accessibility to the broadest possible representation of American women, a location in^a middle western city with a spacious conference center might be preferable.

4. We have had some discussion within the staff as to how to limit the national conference to the number that can be accommodated in the facilities available in Washington. Should there be delegates elected by the State conferences - perhaps one for each Congressional district and two at large? Since many women who are individual leaders in the women's movement or heads of organizations with much to contribute to a national conference would not be elected, there would need to be some mechanism for inviting additional persons to participate.

5. Would it be desirable to have a formula for allocating money to the States? Although we do not anticipate any large expenses for the State conferences, it will be necessary to subsidize expenses of women who would otherwise be unable to participate, pay a coordinator whose services would be required for a considerable period of time, and to reimburse speakers and consultants.

6. The Commission would need to have its own allocation of "slots" (a ceiling on the number of positions established by the Office of Management and Budget). Our staffing of the Commission has been greatly handicapped

by the necessity of persuading agencies to give us "slots", and we do not know how many of those we now have would be extended. Please consider including some language in the bill to accomplish this.

7. We may have to secure space in some other building, at least temporarily, for the additional staff needed to begin planning the conferences. The State Department has been very generous in providing us with space and telephones without charge but we are presently very crowded. Please include some language to give the Commission the authority to secure other space if needed.

Thank you again, Congresswoman Abzug, for your foresight and dedication to the promotion of human equality. When the bill is approved, I assure you the Commission and Secretariat will do everything possible to meet the great responsibility placed on it, and to provide a national forum which will engage the interest and commitment of all Americans to human equality.