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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 15, 1976

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR:

JACK MARSH
MAX FRIEDERSDORF

FROM:

JIM CONNOR *JEC*

The attached newspaper clipping was returned in the President's outbox with the following notation:

"Good editorial. Save for veto message,
if necessary."

Please follow-up with appropriate action.

cc: Dick Cheney
Bob Hartmann

Attachment -

Article from CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR (no date)
entitled "Save Campaign Watchdog"

3/14/76

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Jack Marsh) Max F

Good editorial. Love
for net's message, if
necessary.

Save campaign watchdog

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN . . .

As the presidential primary machine rumbles along, there is a very real chance that a monkey wrench could be thrown into the gearbox.

The Federal Election Commission, written into law when the need for campaign reform became overwhelming, may well go out of business if Congress fails to move sharply. The result could be not only confusion for the major political parties and remaining candidates, but a setback for the necessary straightening out of campaign problems still needing to be solved.

The nub of the problem is the U.S. Supreme Court's insistence that since the election commission performs essentially executive functions, all its members should be appointed by the president with congressional confirmation instead of having some members named by Congress as is now the case.

The court extended its deadline for restructuring the commission to March 22, but what can only be viewed as obstructionist tactics in Congress — especially the House — threaten to do in this important campaign watchdog at a critical moment.

Among the election commission's tasks are certifying candidate subsidies from the cache of public funds voluntarily set aside from individual income tax returns, writing and enforcing campaign regulations, and investigating wrongdoing. This could all be continued quite simply by a law restructuring the commission to conform with the court decision.

But congressional Democrats, under strong pressure from labor unions, want to tinker with the law by restricting recently legalized corporate campaign committees. They would confine corporate campaign soliciting to stockholders and executives while allowing unions to seek political funds from all members.

Other members of Congress are trying to attach provisions for congressional campaign subsidies to the law urgently needed to keep the election commission alive.

The whole question of corporate and union power in campaigns, especially the pressure from above to support a particular candidate or party, may well need to be examined and perhaps restricted. And it can be argued that extending public financing to congressional races might help relax the tight hold of incumbents on Capitol Hill seats.

But the middle of a campaign is not the time to be rewriting election law. If those kinds of provisions are worthwhile, they should be able to stand on their own and not be pinned to the skirts of something for the moment more essential.

President Ford has warned that he will veto "any bill that will create confusion and will invite further delay and litigation."

Congress should simply legitimize the Federal Election Commission and leave the rest for later.