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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 19, 1976

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR: JIM CANNON

FROM: JIM CONNOR *JEC*

SUBJECT: Date of White House Conference on
Handicapped Individuals

The President reviewed your memorandum of March 16 and approved the recommendation concerning the date of April 1977 for the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals. The proposed announcement concerning the Conference was also approved.

Please follow-up with appropriate action.

cc: Dick Cheney /

THE WHITE HOUSE

DECISION

WASHINGTON

March 16, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: JIM CANNON *Jin*
SUBJECT: DATE OF WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON
HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS

This is to present for your decision the question of changing the date of the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals.

BACKGROUND

Last November you announced the calling of the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals for December, 1976. This was the last date allowed by the authorizing legislation.

Since then, at the request of the National Planning and Advisory Council which is jointly responsible with Secretary Mathews for planning and conducting the Conference, the Congress passed S.J. 154 which permits you to hold the Conference in 1977. You signed S.J. 154 on February 27.

ISSUE

The question is whether to change the Conference date to April, 1977, from December, 1976.

PROS

1. Extension of the Conference date would allow the National Planning and Advisory Council 18 months for their task, as they are requesting. Because of administrative delays, the Council was not established until November, 1975, only fourteen months before the National Conference date.

2. Extension of the Conference date would allow the States the additional three months they are requesting to plan and conduct the State Conferences and to involve as many consumers as possible. Some States, such as Pennsylvania and New Mexico, have indicated they cannot hold a conference before September. Other States, such as Texas, California, New York, and Massachusetts, are having difficulties with the appointment of State Directors for the Conference. Also, State planning is said to be hindered by the unavailability of the planning grants before May, 1976.
3. Extension of the Conference date to April has been strongly endorsed by the President's Committee on Mental Retardation, the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, the Easter Seal Society and the Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, the largest handicapped coalition representing about 120 important organizations.
4. The passage of S.J. 154 without objection indicates that the Congress yields to the request of the National Planning and Advisory Council to change the date. Senators Stafford, Randolph and Dole (who is on the Advisory Council) and Congressmen Quie and Brademas are said to support an April, 1977 date.
5. Logistical arrangements for a Conference date in April, 1977, would be easier. In December uncertain weather conditions, peak season holiday travel and holiday commitments could limit ability to get reservations, attendance of delegates and availability of speakers.
6. No additional funds would be required for an April conference.

CON

1. You have already announced the December, 1976 date.
2. Because no additional funds are authorized, the Conference will be able to afford 100 fewer paid delegates. The money will be used to extend for three months the time for writing the final report and recommendations. The probable maximum number of paid delegates would thus be reduced from 800 to 700. There would still be about 1000 observers. HEW informally indicates that if you feel strongly about increasing the number of delegates, with Congressional approval we might be able to reprogram funds from HEW and other agencies.

3. Recommendations from the State and National Conferences would be available for consideration by State and National decision-makers several months later since the final reports would not be ready until September, 1977 rather than June, 1977. As a result, new initiatives to assist handicapped persons would be implemented more slowly.

AGENCY AND STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Mathews: In view of the Department's interest in ensuring the most effective conference possible, the Secretary recommends that the President approve an April date and issue the appropriate announcement.

Marrs: Approval

Buchen, Hartmann
Morton, Friedersdorf No objection to an April 1977 date.

Lynn (O'Neill) No recommendation

RECOMMENDATION

I feel that the December date will inhibit staff and State planners in their preparation for conferences of quality and may result in frustrating the very constituencies we are seeking to assist through the conferences.

Since the April date has been requested or endorsed by so many groups involved and since no additional funds are required, I recommend that you decide to hold the national conference in April, 1977.

I also recommend that you approve the announcement (text approved by Robert T. Hartmann attached at Tab A) for immediate release.

DECISION

Approve April date and issue announcement

Disapprove April date

RR 7

DRAFT ANNOUNCEMENT

At the request of the National Planning and Advisory Council to the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and with the authorization of the Congress, I hereby declare that the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals shall be held in ^{spring} April 1977.

A Spring 1977 Conference is strongly supported by many of the States and by various organizations for the handicapped. ~~The April date~~ ^{this} will allow the States time to plan their conferences properly and involve more people especially the handicapped. This should contribute to a better National Conference.

I feel that this involvement is important. As I said when I announced the Conference last November, a major purpose of this conference is to generate a responsive national awareness of the problems facing the handicapped. Concern for the handicapped should not be limited to the Federal Government. States and local officials, and private citizens as well, must turn their attention to the needs of the handicapped. The private sector can perform a creative role by contributing its talents and resources.

The White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals is a very important occasion which should contribute significantly to the health, education and welfare of handicapped individuals everywhere.