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September 1, 1976

SUBJECT:

SUNSHINE LAW

The House and Senate yesterday passed the so-called "Sunshine Bill," requiring major Federal agencies to meet in public.

Will the President sign the bill?

GUIDANCE: Yes, the President will sign the bill.

As you know, the President has been a strong supporter of open government.

We will announce a signing date when the bill reaches the White House.

BACKGROUND

The bill was passed by the House 340-0 yesterday and by the Senate last night.

It would force open meetings of approximately 50 federal agencies. It would not apply to White House staff meetings, or to meetings of the Cabinet or the National Security Council.

Meetings regarding areas such as national defense or security, trade secrets, criminal matters or personal privacy matters also would be exempt. Detailed minutes or transcripts of meetings held behind closed doors, for reason of the above exemptions, would have to be kept.

The open meetings provision would apply to federal agencies covered by the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act that are headed by a commission of two or more members subject to Senate confirmation.

The bill would require agencies to announce meetings at least one a week in advance and to announce the names and telephone numbers of officials who can be called for information about the meetings. A citizen could challenge a decision for a closed meeting and if a court decided it was improperly held in secret, the court could release the transcript of the meeting.

JBS/9-1-76

July 29, 1976

SUBJECT:

SUNSHINE BILL

Will the President sign the Sunshine bill which passed the House yesterday and now goes to Conference?

GUIDANCE: Without having all of the details, as we understand it, there were some positive steps taken prior to final passage of this legislation yesterday.

However, until we have a copy of this legislation with more details, we cannot be specific on what the President will do.

JGC

March 3, 1976

SUBJECT:

SUNSHINE BILL

Yesterday the House Government Operations Committee reported out the "sunshine bill," which would end secret deliberations by federal agencies, except in unusually sensitive instances.

What is the President's reaction to this bill?

GUIDANCE: As you know, the President fully supports openness in government, but he does have specific objections to this particular bill. For instance, the bill does not list exactly which agencies are covered, and also it requires the Federal Reserve Board and the SEC to make public sensitive financial data coming out of private meetings.

(If the reporters want more specific information, I am getting a list of objections from Parsons.)

ME