

The original documents are located in Box 121, folder “Voter Registration” of the Ron Nessen Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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QUESTION:

Ron, Governor Carter has contacted Speaker Albert and requested that he seek expeditious passage of H. R. 11552, the Voter Registration Act. What is the President's position?

ANSWER:

The President has opposed the Voter Registration Act (authorizing citizens to register for Federal elections by post card). ~~There is little assurance that increased registration will increase voter participation in elections, when great numbers who are already registered do not show up at the polls to vote. Also, the Act will be an administrative nightmare for State and local governments and it will increase the potential and likelihood for fraud.~~ This legislation would create additional financial burdens on the Federal government when the President is trying to curb Federal spending, and it would establish a further large Federal administration within the Federal Election Commission.

Major argument. →
Voter registration is traditionally a state responsibility.

ES/BNR 7/27/76

August 9, 1976

SUBJECT: POSTCARD REGISTRATION REACTION

What is the President's reaction to the passage yesterday of the postcard registration bill in the House, including the substitution of the Bonker amendment (which deleted the Thompson amendment to mail registration forms to virtually every household in the country)?

I have explained to you before the President's reasons for opposing voter registration by mail, including involving the Federal Government in what he believes is a state issue, and inviting fraud in Federal elections. I think that if you read Congressman Bonker's arguments yesterday on the House floor, you'll see some additional reasons, including the effect of postcard registration upon elections in the District of Columbia, where this is the practice.

As for the Bonker amendment, we believe it mitigates somewhat the President's concerns, but the President still believes that this is a matter the States should handle.

THE WHITE HOUSE


WASHINGTON

July 30, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR:

RON NESSEN

FROM:

ED SCHMULTS 

SUBJECT:

Voter Registration Act - H. R. 11552

Here is a revised Q and A on the Voter Registration Act. I believe the answer reflects the most recent guidance of the President.

cc: Dick Cheney

QUESTION:

Ron, Governor Carter has contacted Speaker Albert and requested that he seek expeditious passage of H. R. 11552, the Voter Registration Act. What is the President's position?

ANSWER:

The President favors participation by all eligible citizens in free and honest elections but he has opposed the Voter Registration Act (authorizing citizens to register for Federal elections by postcard). The Act will increase the potential and likelihood for fraud and it will be an administrative nightmare for State and local governments.

Aside from this potential for harm, there is little assurance that increased registration will increase voter participation in elections, when great numbers who are already registered do not show up at the polls to vote. Also, the proposed legislation would create additional financial burdens on the Federal government when the President is trying to curb Federal spending, and it would establish a further large Federal administration within the Federal Election Commission.

Finally, this is an example of the Federal Government intruding in matters the primary responsibility for which the Constitution has left to the states. Never before has Congress attempted to legislate in the field of registration when due process or equal protection concerns are not present.