

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND

ROBERT D. RAY
GOVERNOR FROM THE STATE OF IOWA
CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL GOVERNORS CONFERENCE

THE ROSE GARDEN

11:34 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Let me thank the various Governors here -- Governor Ray, Governor Rampton, Governor O'Callaghan, Governor Bennett and Governor Moore, representing the Governors and the Governors Conference -- for coming for the signing of the highway message.

The highway message is about 20 years after the establishment of the interstate highway system, some 42,500 miles. President Eisenhower took the lead, and Congress approved the establishment of the interstate highway system, one of the great public works projects in the history of the United States.

Times have changed, and as a result, in the highway message that I am sending, I am recommending the consolidation of some 30 categorical grant programs into four basic areas for the utilization of Federal funds.

We are going to have the funds to complete the interstate system. We will have the funds for an urban area highway program, and we will have a rural highway program, and then we will have the safety and beautification programs as a result.

This program tends to give to the States greater flexibility in the utilization of the funds for the completion of the interstate system and the development of a sound highway program.

We have made great strides in our highway construction. It has tied cities together, it has tied the Nation together, but there are some essential links that need completion in the interstate system. They will be completed under this program, and at the same time, we accelerate, through the flexibility, the development of highway programs in each of the various States.

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So, it is a pleasure and a privilege for me to sign this message that will provide roughly \$3 billion 250 million a year for the interstate system, around \$1 billion 50 million for the rural program, \$800 million a year for the urban program, \$400 million a year for the safety program, and \$65 million a year for the beautification program.

This, I believe, is a major step forward in the extension and completion of our various highway programs.

I thank Governor Ray and his associates for coming and participating in this ceremony. With their help, I am at least confident we can convince the Congress to take this very significant forward step.

As soon as I finish this, Bob, if you want to add a word on behalf of the Governors, I will appreciate it.

GOVERNOR RAY: Mr. President, I want first of all to thank you for calling us in and giving us an opportunity to be briefed on this particular message. I think it is significant that the President has seen fit to realize the importance of States as we plan our transportation systems in our respective States.

The provisions that the President is proposing would provide that the States have at least 1 cent out of that 4 cent gasoline tax, and we would be free to do with that as we see fit. In addition to that, we would be able to pre-empt 1 cent of the 4 cents by adopting in our respective States an opportunity to have another cent gasoline tax for our use and our purposes.

So, I think it is a step in the right direction, Mr. President. I think it could be very helpful in our States as we plan our transportation needs for the future.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much.

END (AT 11:38 A.M. EDT)