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Office of the White House Press Secretary
(Vail, Colorado)

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I have approved H. R. 7710, a bill which would make a desirable change in the tariff schedules affecting watches and watch movements manufactured in U. S. insular possessions. It would also amend the new child support program which became law last January as part of the Social Security Act.

The child support amendments which were added to this bill shortly before the Congress recessed will provide some States needed time to change their laws to comply with the new program, which became effective on August 1, 1975. They will also help in the orderly implementation of this program and will strengthen the confidentiality of records in the program of Aid to Families with Dependent Children by specifying the purposes for disclosure of such records.

One of these amendments requires the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare to develop standards to assure that unreasonable demands are not made on individuals to cooperate with States in their child support collection efforts. Regrettably, this amendment requires the Secretary to submit the proposed standards to the Congress with the provision that they may be disapproved by either House within 60 days.

As I indicated when I signed into law the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1975 on May 26, I am seriously concerned about the increasing frequency of passage by Congress of legislation containing such provisions, which are an unconstitutional exercise of congressional power. At the same time, I believe it is entirely proper for the Congress to request information and to be consulted on the operation of Government programs.

I am therefore instructing the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare to treat this provision of H. R. 7710 simply as a request for information about the proposed standards in advance of their promulgation. Accordingly, I have asked the Secretary to report to the Congress at least 60 days in advance of the date he intends to issue such standards to protect individuals' interests in child support collection efforts.

When I approved the legislation establishing the new child support program last January, I expressed my strong backing of its objectives. I reaffirm that support now. However, at that time I also stated that some of the program's provisions inject the Federal Government too deeply into domestic relations and that others raise serious privacy and administrative issues. I pointed specifically to the provisions for use of the Federal courts and the tax collection procedures of the Internal Revenue Service for the collection of child support, the provisions imposing excessive audit requirements on the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and the provisions establishing a parent locator service with access to all Federal records.

Legislation which would have corrected these problems was recently passed by the House of Representatives, but these corrective amendments were not included in the bill I have just signed. I urge the Congress to enact such legislation as soon as possible after the current recess, so the desirable objectives of the child support program are not undermined by undue intrusion of the Federal Government into people's personal lives.

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