

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
UPON THE ANNOUNCEMENT  
OF THE  
WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE  
ON HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS

THE CABINET ROOM

11:15 A.M. EST

It is a real privilege and pleasure to have the opportunity of being here today and to recognize Senator Randolph, Senator Stafford, Secretary Mathews, Dr. Viscardi and the other distinguished guests of the many organizations that are greatly interested in and most helpful to the disabled.

I am extremely happy to announce today that the first White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals will be held next year. The time has come for a coordinated undertaking to address the concerns of this Nation's 35 million handicapped citizens to respond to their abilities as well as their disabilities.

This historic White House Conference will be held in December 1976, a fitting climax to the Bicentennial year and the values that we seek to regenerate.

This Conference will bring together representatives of more than 50 Government agencies now dealing with the problems of the handicapped, along with the hundreds of others representing private organizations and State and local departments of Government.

A 28-member National Planning and Advisory Council to the White House Conference has been appointed and this morning I am very pleased to name Dr. Henry Viscardi, Jr. of Long Island -- Kings Point -- as Chairman of this Council. Jack Smith of Rochester, New York, has been appointed as Executive Director of the Planning staff. Both of these men have earned national reputations for their outstanding work for the handicapped. Both have overcome disabilities to demonstrate great abilities.

I am pleased that both Dr. Viscardi and Mr. Smith are here with us today and that also in attendance are Secretary Mathews of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Senator Randolph of West Virginia, and Senator Stafford of Vermont, as well as representatives of eight key organizations working for the handicapped.

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A major purpose of this Conference is to generate a responsive national awareness of the problems facing the handicapped. Concern for the handicapped is not unique to the Federal Government. State and local officials and private citizens must also turn their attention to the needs of the handicapped.

Action to alleviate these needs will be one of the major purposes of this Conference. Along with my colleagues in the Congress and State and local units of Government, I look forward to receiving the recommendations from the Conference.

I was delighted to learn that the newly formed National Planning and Advisory Council will require that at least a half of the National Conference be handicapped individuals themselves. Obviously, this makes very good sense. The problems of the handicapped are too often left to people without handicaps who may sometimes lack personal experience which gives great insight.

Of the 28 million adults with physical and mental handicaps, only 800,000 are currently employed and many of these have jobs below their abilities.

This Nation's handicapped citizens have a right to live with self-reliance, with the same dignity as all of their fellow citizens, to help them realize their full capacity as human beings, to help them achieve higher levels of personal and professional fulfillment.

These are the goals of this Conference and I wish all who participate from now on, as well as those who will participate in December, I wish them the very best.

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(AT 11:20 A.M. EST)

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