

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 1, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES:

I return without my approval S. 2350, a bill "To amend the National Security Act of 1947, as amended, to include the Secretary of the Treasury as a member of the National Security Council."

The National Security Council is one of the most important organizations in the Executive Office of the President. The Council's function, under the law, is to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to the national security. The President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of Defense are the statutory members of the Council. In addition, the President may, under the law, appoint by and with the advice and consent of the Senate the Secretaries and Under Secretaries of other executive departments and of the military departments to serve at his pleasure. No President has ever exercised this latter authority.

In my judgment, enactment of S. 2350 is not necessary. From its establishment in 1947, each President has invited from time to time additional officers to participate in National Security Council deliberations when matters specifically relating to their responsibilities have been considered. In line with this practice, the President invites the Secretary of the Treasury to participate in Council affairs when issues of substantial interest to the Department of the Treasury are involved. Thus, existing arrangements provide for adequate participation of the Secretary of the Treasury in National Security Council matters.

Furthermore, additional mechanisms exist to assure that the President receives advice which takes into account the proper integration and coordination of domestic and international economic policy with foreign policy and national security objectives. Both the Economic Policy Board and the Council for International Economic Policy provide the President with high level advice on economic matters. The Secretary of the Treasury is the Chairman of these two bodies on which the Secretary of State also serves.

I believe that S. 2350 is undesirable as well as unnecessary. The proper concerns of the National Security Council extend substantially beyond the statutory responsibilities and focus of the Secretary of the Treasury. Most issues that come before the Council on a regular basis do not have significant economic and monetary implications.

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Moreover, a large number of executive departments and agencies have key responsibilities for programs affecting international economic policy. From time to time these programs influence importantly our foreign policy and national security decisions. The Treasury Department does not and could not represent all those interests. Extending full statutory membership on the National Security Council to the Secretary of the Treasury would not achieve the purpose of bringing to bear on decisions the full range of international economic considerations.

For these several reasons, I am concerned that increasing the statutory membership of the Council might well diminish its flexibility and usefulness as a most important advisory mechanism for the President.

In sum, S. 2350 is unnecessary, since adequate arrangements for providing advice to the President on the integration of economic and foreign policy already exist, and it is undesirable because the proposed arrangement is inconsistent with the purposes of the National Security Council and would lessen the current and desirable flexibility of the President in arranging for advice on the broad spectrum of international and national security policy matters.

GERALD R. FORD

THE WHITE HOUSE,
December 31, 1975

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