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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

On October 15, 1974, I signed into law the Federal Election Campaign Act Amendments of 1974 which made far-reaching changes in the laws affecting Federal elections in election campaign practices. This law created the Federal Election Commission to administer and enforce a comprehensive regulatory scheme for Federal campaigns.

On January 30, 1976, the United States Supreme Court ruled that certain features of the new law were unconstitutional. The Court allowed a total of 50 days to "afford Congress an opportunity to reconstitute the Commission by law."

On February 16th, I submitted legislation to reconstitute the Commission and urged Congress to enact quickly this required change so it could continue to operate through the 1976 election. This is the simple and fair thing to do.

Instead, Congress has already spent over 70 days in its attempt to amend the existing law in many unnecessary areas.

Because of this delay, campaigns which were planned in accordance with the funding and regulatory provisions of the election law now lack funds and lack ground rules. The complex changes in the draft conference bill can only introduce added uncertainty in the law, and thus create confusion for the candidates in the present campaigns and jeopardize the conduct of this year's Presidential election.

Accordingly, I again urge the Congress to immediately pass the simple corrections mandated by the Supreme Court and proposed by me. The American people want and deserve an independent and effective Election Commission. There must be a fair and clear law on the books to guide the campaigns. All Presidential candidates need the funds which are blocked by the Congressional inaction.

A Congressional conference committee is still working on the details of the Federal Election Commission legislation. This legislation could have a major impact on how Presidential elections are conducted in this country. This is not a subject that any President can treat lightly, and I will not commit myself to sign or veto until the Congress completes definitive action on the bill.

There is no question that the Congressional conferees can adopt a bill which I can quickly sign into law. They should avoid objectionable and highly controversial provisions by moving towards simple reconstitution suggested by the Supreme Court and proposed by me in February.

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