

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JUNE 24, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
UPON SIGNING THE BUSING MESSAGE

THE OVAL OFFICE

11:40 A.M. EDT

To many Americans busing appears the only way to achieve the equal educational opportunities so long denied them. To many other Americans busing appears to restrict their individual freedom to choose the best school for their children to attend.

It is my responsibility and the responsibility of the Congress to seek a solution to this problem -- a solution true to our common beliefs in civil rights for all Americans, individual freedom for every American in the best public education for our children.

Today I am submitting to the Congress legislation which I believe offers such a solution. I ask the Congress to join with me in establishing the guidelines for the lower Federal courts to follow. Busing as a remedy ought to be the last resort and it ought to be limited in duration and in scope to correcting the effects of previous violations. These legislative guidelines are drawn within the framework of the Constitution.

I believe every American community should desegregate on a voluntary basis. Therefore, I am proposing the establishment of a committee composed of citizens who have had community experience in school desegregation and who are willing to assist other communities in voluntarily desegregating their schools.

Citizens groups I have consulted on both sides of the busing issue have told me such a committee would be a welcome resource to communities which face up to the issue honestly, voluntarily and in the best spirit of American democracy.

Concern has been expressed that by submitting this bill at this time we risk encouraging those who are resisting court-ordered desegregation sometimes to the point of violence. Let me state here and now that this Administration will not tolerate unlawful segregation. We will act swiftly and effectively against anyone who engages in violence. This Administration will do whatever it must to preserve order and to protect the constitutional rights of our citizens.

The purpose of submitting this legislation now is to place the debate on this controversial issue in the halls of the Congress, a responsible and orderly debate within the Democratic process and not on the streets of our cities.

I will now sign the two messages -- one to the House and one to the Senate -- which will be delivered today along with the proposed legislation.

END (AT 11:43 A.M. EDT)