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UNTIL 3:30 P.M. (EDT)

JULY 1, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

FACT SHEET

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE OBSERVANCE OF
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

The President today accepted the report of the National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year and announced the appointment of a new Presiding Officer of the Commission.

The President also took this occasion to announce that he has directed the Attorney General to develop, in consultation with affected Federal agencies, a plan to review the entire United States Code to determine the need for revising sex-based provisions that are not justified.

BACKGROUND

The National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year was created by President Ford on January 9, 1975, when the President signed Executive Order 11832. The purpose of this Commission was to promote the national observance in the United States of International Women's Year.

On April 2, 1975, the President appointed 35 members from private life to the Commission. They were joined by 4 members from the Congress. Jill Ruckelshaus was named the Presiding Officer.

On November 25, 1975, the President extended the life of the Commission to June 30, 1976.

In December of 1975, a bill was signed by the President (P.L. 94-167) extending the life of the Commission for the purpose of organizing and convening a National Women's Conference, to be preceded by 56 state and territorial conferences. The purpose of these conferences will be to assess progress toward insuring equality for all women and to set goals for eliminating barriers toward their full and equal participation in American life.

Today, the President accepted the report of the Commission as required by Executive Order 11832.

DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVES

The President has directed the Attorney General to develop, in conjunction with affected Federal agencies, a comprehensive plan for accomplishing a review of the United States Code to determine need for revision of sex-based provisions that are not justified.

Also, the President encouraged the Governors of all the States to initiate a similar review of all State laws to bring them into harmony with our American philosophy of absolute equality under the law. He suggested that the State and national conferences should help in this process.

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A problem the President also suggested for attention at the State and national conferences is the widening earnings gap between men and women. He further stated that this will be addressed immediately as a matter of priority for his Administration.

NEW APPOINTMENTS

The President announced the appointment of Judge Elizabeth Athanasakos as the new Presiding Officer replacing Jill Ruckelshaus who has resigned as the Presiding Officer. Judge Athanasakos is a former municipal judge and a practicing attorney from Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. She has served as Chairperson of the HEW Advisory Committee on the Rights and Responsibilities of Women, and as a member of the President's Task Force on Women's Rights and Responsibilities.

The President also indicated that Ersa Poston will serve as vice Presiding Officer. Ms. Poston is the Past President of the New York State Civil Service Commission and is currently serving as a member of the Commission.

This morning the appointment of new members of the Commission was announced. They are:

Nora Jimenez Casiano, of Puerto Rico, Business Manager of Caribbean Business, Isla Verde, Puerto Rico vice Barbara Bergmann, resigned.

Jocelyn Maurie Dan Wurzburg, of Tennessee, Member of the Tennessee Commission for Human Development, Memphis, Tennessee vice Mary S. Coleman, resigned.

Mary Germany, of Mississippi, Election Commissioner, Meridian, Mississippi vice Katharine Hepburn, resigned.

Ming Hsu, of New Jersey, Manager of International Marketing Planning at RCA, New York, New York vice William C. Mercer, resigned.

Shirley Price, of Kentucky, former elementary teacher, Louisville, Kentucky vice Weston Christopherson, resigned.

Patricia Saiki, of Hawaii, Member of the State Senate, Honolulu, Hawaii, vice Winfield Dunn, resigned.

Jean Stapleton, of California, Actress, Los Angeles, California vice Patricia Carbine, resigned.

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