

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPTEMBER 24, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

I am returning, without my approval, H.R. 13655, the "Automotive Transport Research and Development Act of 1976."

This bill would establish a five-year research and development program within the Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA) leading to the development of advanced automobile propulsion systems, advanced automobile subsystems, and integrated test vehicles to promote the development of advanced alternatives to existing automobiles. The major objective of the program would be the development and construction of integrated test vehicles which would incorporate advanced automobile engines into complete vehicles conforming to Federal requirements for safety, emissions, damageability, and fuel economy. Such development would unnecessarily duplicate existing authorities and extend into areas private industry is best equipped to pursue.

Both ERDA and the Department of Transportation (DOT), the two Federal agencies which would be most directly affected by this program, already have sufficient authority to accomplish the objectives of this bill. Under the authority of the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974 and the Federal Non-nuclear Energy Research and Development Act of 1974, ERDA's Highway Vehicle Systems Program is presently proceeding with the development of new automobile engine systems to the point where several prototype systems can be demonstrated in vehicles on the road. Under my fiscal year 1977 budget, ERDA will continue to emphasize the development of such advanced engines designed to meet higher levels of fuel economy and lower emissions.

Ongoing DOT programs under the authority of the Department of Transportation Act, the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966, and the Motor Vehicle Information and Cost Savings Act are currently sponsoring advanced automobile research that, except for advanced automobile engines, will achieve the purposes of this bill. Detailed design development for two versions of a Research Safety Vehicle should be completed before the end of this year. Under my fiscal year 1977 budget, DOT will have sufficient funds for its advanced automobile research and development activities.

The Federal government, through ERDA and DOT, can play an important role in exploring the research areas that must be developed before advanced automobiles are produced which meet the Nation's conservation goals -- especially in the critical area of new engine research. However, it must be recognized that private industry has substantial expertise and interest in the development and production of advanced automobiles. The appropriate Federal role in this area should be confined to research and development only, and not extend into borderline commercial areas which private industry is best able to perform.

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This highly complex technological program, moreover, would eventually require a massive spending program not reflected in the bill's \$100 million start-up authorizations for the first two years of the program. This bill would unnecessarily expand research and development programs now underway, and would provide no commensurate benefit for the taxpayers who must pay for this program. I am therefore returning the bill without my approval.

GERALD R. FORD

THE WHITE HOUSE,

September 24, 1976.

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