

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

October 30, 1973

The Honorable Gerald R. Ford
Minority Leader
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Jerry:

I am terribly sorry to be so late in getting this memo to you. I was in Illinois and Minnesota over the weekend and these past two days have been unbelievably busy with Conference Committee work.

Anyway, here are a few observations. I hope they are helpful.

Sincerely,


Hubert H. Humphrey

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

October 30, 1973

MEMORANDUM

TO: Gerald R. Ford

FROM: Hubert H. Humphrey

RE: The Vice Presidency

The office of the Vice Presidency has been described in many ways, but one accurate characterization is to say that it is an awkward office at best. The man who occupies it will have many responsibilities and no authority with the one exception provided in the Constitution; namely, as the presiding officer of the Senate, he may cast a vote to break a tie.

When I refer to responsibility, I mean that when you occupy the office of Vice President, you must keep in mind that it is the second highest office in the gift of the American people. Also, you are the presiding officer of the Senate and have the duty to assist the Senate in the conducting of its business, particularly by an impartial and understanding application of the Senate rules. As the Vice President, you are the alter ego of the President. What you do or don't do tends to reflect on him. One's conduct in this office is a measure of the respect the occupant of the office has for the Constitution, for the Executive and Legislative branches of government, and for the people.

What the Vice President will do or is permitted to do, in the main, will be determined by what the President assigns to him or permits him to do. Indeed, even much of the staff of the Vice President is provided by the Executive department, and only a modest amount of staff is provided by the Legislative appropriation. In other words, the Vice Presidency is a hybrid office. It is in part Legislative due to the Vice President's role as presiding officer of the Senate, but in the main it is Executive.

The power and authority that you have as Vice President will be determined by the measure of the power and authority that the President is willing to share with you or delegate to you.

In other words, the President can give you assignments and trust you with authority -- grant you some power as he sees fit. Likewise, he can remove the authority and power at his will. I used to call this Humphrey's law -- "He who giveth can taketh away and often does."

The Vice President should be called upon to undertake a number of assignments. As he is familiar with the work and procedure of Congress, he can be a very effective liaison between the Congress and the Executive branch. He can be, if the President so desires or permits, the eyes and ears of the President insofar as developments in the Congress are concerned and in the other areas of government. He can be a broker between the Congress and the White House -- working with problems and seeing to it that members of Congress have an opportunity to speak to the President. In other words, the Vice President can and, I think, should be the representative of the President with the Congress and the representative of the Congress with the President. It is he who should cut through the Executive branch bureaucracy so that the President can hear from members of Congress, listen to their complaints and ideas. Likewise, the Vice President can and should be in contact with the department heads in undertaking the mission of liaison with the Congress and the departments.

I further suggest that the Vice President can and should work closely with mayors, county officials, and all other government officials including state legislators. He can be the voice of the Administration to these local officials. He can also be the voice of these officials back to the Administration. He can explain programs, and he can act as a special representative for local government in getting things done by handling cases and complaints and cutting through the bureaucratic red tape.

The Vice President also is frequently called upon to be the nation's representative in missions overseas. It should be remembered that he is the second highest officer in our government and, therefore, in terms of protocol, is above an Ambassador or a Cabinet officer or any other representative of the Executive branch. He can be called upon to handle delicate matters for the President just as he can be called upon to fulfill some of the formalities of diplomatic relations.

Finally, it is important for a Vice President to remember that he is not the President and, therefore, can only speak for the government when he is authorized to do so. I believe that it is important for the Vice President to be loyal to the President's policies and at the same time to speak candidly, in private, with the President in any disagreements in policy so that the President may have the benefit of the Vice President's advice and counsel. This particular function may not always please the President for the moment, but it is important for the Vice President to get around the country and listen to what people are saying, to be close to the Congress, conveying his observations and thoughts, as a result of this open contact, directly to the President. I emphasize the direct and personal relationship. It isn't good enough to convey one's observations to the President's subordinates.

These are just a few of the observations that I share with you. I hope they are helpful.

HUMPHREY, Hon. Hubert H.

(statement on the Vice Presidency)

November 5, 1973

The Honorable Hubert H. Humphrey
232 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D. C.

Dear Hubert:

Thank you so much for taking the time to set down your observations on the Vice Presidency.

It is easy to see from your comments, "that you have been there" and that your advice and counsel is based upon actual experience and firsthand observation.

The thoughts that you have shared with me are most helpful as I proceed through the confirmation process and will be even more helpful should fate and the confirmation process decide that I am to serve our Country as Vice President.

Warm personal regards,

Gerald R. Ford, M. C.

GRF:bn

