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4/19/75

To: The President  
From: J.R. Stiles *JRS*

Subject: Timing of active candidacy.

Until this date I have not thought that active candidacy was yet necessary.

Discussions with a number of experienced convention "pros", however, have convinced me that we should make the decision sooner rather than later.

I had informal discussions with R. Hartman, G. Anderson, Bill Scranton, Charlie McWhorter, John Byrnes, Lou Frey, Mel Laird, Robert Finch, Pat Hillings, Ed Terril and others. They all express a concern that delaying further may create convention problems.

Compelling reasons:

- 1) In many areas the party is fragmenting over ideology.
- 2) This fragmentation is egged on by ultra conservatives who are exploiting talk that "Ford is not a serious candidate but plans to step aside for Rocky." These are scare tactics to drum up recruits for Reagan and they are working.
- 3) The Reagan enthusiasts are solidifying their forces and gaining hard to reverse commitments on the county level.
- 4) The Florida Primary comes within a week of New Hampshire (10th in the rollcall.) Florida has many ultra conservatives plus aggrieved Cubans who see "detente" with Castro as their abandonment by the administration.
- 5) The largest single delegation, California, is 5th in the rollcall. Obviously Reagan will be pushed to run as a "favorite son." Whatever happens in this situation, Ford must establish grass roots support from the key California county chairmen.

It appears to be the combined judgement of those consulted that we need more specific political activities now. The disadvantages of becoming an official candidate may be outweighed by the urgency of the situation.



Suggested Plan of Action

- 1) Selection and announcement of a Ford-for-President finance chairman. Employment of a political fund-raising expert.
- 2) Begin active solicitation including direct mail as the Democrat candidates are doing. It was announced yesterday that George Wallace has already qualified for primary matching funds. (\$100,000 raised in 20 states in gifts not more than \$250 each.)
- 3) Locate and designate approximately 7 qualified volunteer field men. They should travel the states contacting political leaders gathering grass roots information. (I have the names of some who have offered their services.)
- 4) Establish a campaign "kitchen cabinet" made up of those interested and available to meet at least once a week to recommend policy. A number of those named above are ready and willing to serve in this capacity without compensation, reward, or official recognition

NOTE: My suggestion is not to designate a campaign manager at this time. The title of "coordinator" might be suitable for a nuts-and-bolts man to supervise the work of the field men and report to the White House and "kitchen cabinet."

Obviously active campaign personnel would not be on the White House payroll.

- 5) Open a modest Ford-for-President office in Washington, D.C.

It is my recommendation that we delay designating "state chairmen" for the time being. Field reports will yield insight into personalities in the various states. Many campaigns have been side-tracked by the wrong choice of state chairmen

- 6) Arrange for an attorney who knows the new campaign law; also a qualified accountant to keep the strict records of contributions and expenditures required.



Nominating Politics

- 1) From the information developed in the next two months (against the forecasted calendar of events), the "kitchen cabinet" together with other consultants such as state chairmen and national committee persons can set up an action plan of priorities.

At the moment top priority should go to --

FIRST --Florida  
SECOND--New Hampshire  
THIRD --California

No-one can foresee events what may alter priorities but immediate political action in these states is essential.

- 2) A financial budget with strict controls must be established for PRIMARY CAMPAIGNS. Because of the 10 Million limitation (an unprecedented restriction) money must be allocated most precisely and unfortunately there is no-one who can claim to be an expert in this area.

Priorities in spending will be as important as priorities in campaigning, scheduling, and appearances.

What should be spent on literature?

What should be spent on travel?

What should be spent on phones and long distance?

What should be spent on postage and direct mail?

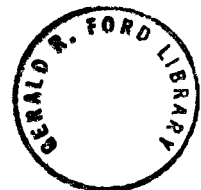
What should be spent on TV and radio, and newspapers?

Because the Vice President's campaign activities and expenses must come out of the same 10 million as the President's, how can he be used most effectively?

NOTE: Of the 10 million not more than \$200,000 or 2 x 8¢ multiplied by the voting age population of the state may be spent in any one primary. Thus California, the single most important state will be tough to deal with on such limited funds.

- 3) The campaign of '76 must put the heaviest reliance on VOLUNTEER MANPOWER. We must organize nationally in the next 20 months as we did in '48 in the Fifth District. The development of a plan to achieve this end must go apace.

This will truly have to be a SHOE LEATHER campaign. We should preempt this slogan, "Ford will conduct an all-out shoe leather campaign in '76."



Nominating Politics (cont.)

The name of the game in nominating politics is GOP DELEGATES.

The magic number is one more than half.

It is possible to be nominated when as few as thirty states have been called in the roll.

This should be our objective.

