

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 6, 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
THROUGH: MR. HARTMANN
FROM: ANNE HIGGINS *Anne Higgins*
SUBJECT: Major Issues Drawing Presidential Mail,
August 9, 1974 - December 1976.

1974: 1,321,506 pieces

The Inauguration, including your incoming address to the people (August 9) and the message to Congress (August 12) brought 26,834 pieces of mail. Most all of these letters expressed support for your efforts and wished you well.

Soon after, the pardon of former President Nixon drew heavy comment with 75,837 expressing support and 197,494 individuals writing to express dissatisfaction with the action.

The WIN Program and suggestions for conservation helped to change the complexion of our mail with 196,800 letters. In addition to writing about what they had done to "WIN," 65,907 people were writing about economic issues, expressing concern over inflation, a possible surtax and energy costs.

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1975: 2,469,660 pieces

In 1975 the largest mail volume of your Administration came on the Common Situs Picketing Bill:

Pro: Letters: 7,179; Forms: 200;
Con: Letters: 47,459; Forms: 598,693.

During the first half of 1975 there was strong public interest in Administration proposals for a comprehensive economic/energy program. There were 41,540 letters in support of your proposals, particularly tax reductions



and energy price decontrol; and there were 70,849 pieces of mail expressing opposition to at least a part of your program. Most often, people opposed decontrol of oil and gasoline prices (which they saw as a first step to substantial price increases). Another 54,932 offered comment, suggestions and compromise proposals.

This disagreement over the issue of decontrol appeared to have a clear economic base. Business and corporate interests favored decontrol, with increased supplies, and prices if necessary, while salaried workers were much concerned with costs and supported controls, and even rationing if necessary.

Foreign policy interest was also fairly strong in 1975. It centered on:

- 1) The fall of South Vietnam and settlement of refugees in this country, with 16,339 supporting aid, 38,817 opposing it.
- 2) The Mayaguez incident, in which you received overwhelming support: 28,745; only 2,662 opposed U.S. rescue efforts.
- 3) Soviet v. Free World competition, with writers including detente generally, the Helsinki meeting, the Panama Canal negotiations, etc., in the equation: 6,326 supported U.S. policy fully, while 19,509 argued that the U.S. should take a harder line.
- 4) Middle East policy:

Pro: 50,644 Con: 32,436.

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1976: 1,138,512 pieces

The Presidential election dominated your mail in 1976: 82,607 pieces. This may generally be divided as follows:

- 1) General Support: 23,133
- 2) Political Comment/Suggestions: 15,675



3) Election Campaign (including debate comment):

Pro:	<u>7,797</u>
Con:	<u>1,913</u>
Comment:	<u>2,093</u>

4) Election Results:

Regrets/Appreciation:	<u>31,462</u>
Comment:	<u>534</u>

The economy was of less immediate interest in 1976: 9,633 pieces. It should be noted, however, that in much of the "political" mail writers did comment that their view of the economy influenced significantly their choice of a candidate. As one might expect, a breakdown of this mail suggests that people toward lower economic levels supported Federal spending, jobs programs, unemployment benefits, etc., while middle to upper income people sought limits on government authority, regulations, spending, etc.

Foreign policy generally dropped as an issue in 1976. However, it did appear that Secretary Kissinger came to personify whatever dissatisfaction people felt over U.S. initiatives, from detente to the protection of human rights in Soviet countries, from Rhodesia to the Panama Canal. There were 6,715 messages of complaint/protest over U.S. policies, 233 in support.

