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Recommended Citation

Bellmon, Henry and Muskie, Edmund S., "Arts, Humanities, and Cultural Affairs Act (1976): Correspondence 04" (1976). *Arts, Humanities, and Cultural Affairs Act (1976)*. Paper 13. https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_II_21/13

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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

DOUGLAS J. BENNET, JR., STAFF DIRECTOR
JOHN T. MC EVOY, CHIEF COUNSEL
ROBERT S. BOYD, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

January 30, 1976

Honorable Harrison A. Williams, Jr.
Chairman, Committee on Labor and
Public Welfare
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter and its attachment are intended to assist your Committee in preparing the March 15, 1976 report required by Section 301(c) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

As you know, the March 15 report is the vehicle by which your Committee advises the Budget Committee of your views and estimates concerning fiscal matters within your Committee's jurisdiction. The report is intended to make your Committee's knowledge, experience and legislative plans available to us during our consideration of the First Concurrent Resolution on the Budget.

Specifically, Section 301(c) of the Act calls for your Committee's March 15 report to include:

(1) Your Committee's estimate of the total amounts of new budget authority and the budget outlays resulting therefrom to be provided or authorized in all bills and resolutions within your Committee's jurisdiction which the Committee intends to be effective during fiscal year 1977.

(2) Your Committee's views and estimates with respect to all other budgetary matters within its jurisdiction relevant to the First Concurrent Resolution on the Budget.*

While the March 15 reports are aimed at the next fiscal year, we also invite your recommendations, if any, on the transition quarter for July 1 to September 30. The Budget Committees have set targets for the transition quarter, and it is our intention to offer a binding Concurrent Resolution for the transition quarter at the time the First Concurrent Resolution for fiscal year 1977 is reported.

*A copy of Sections 301(a) and (c) is included at Attachment A.

(2)

We hope your March 15 report can cover the following major areas:

(1) New Legislation Affecting Fiscal Year 1977

The report should identify all new legislation--all legislation not yet enacted at the time of your report--which will affect budget authority and/or outlays in fiscal year 1977. This should include both "spending" legislation which directly provides budget authority and/or outlays, and "authorizing" legislation on which subsequent appropriations action is required. Legislation revising or extending existing legislation should be included--whether the amount of budget authority is increased or decreased from current levels--as well as legislation providing for new programs. All new legislation which would affect revenues, tax expenditures, or offsetting receipts in fiscal year 1977 should also be included. Legislative items less than \$10 million need not each be identified, but may be aggregated as "all other new legislation."

We realize that at this stage in your deliberations, precise data for each bill or program may not be available. Although we do not make judgments on specific line items, we do want to ensure that the Budget Committee has before it the maximum possible amount of information as it weighs its decisions as to priorities among the various functions.

(2) Ongoing Programs Not Scheduled for Legislative Action

Many programs within your Committee's jurisdiction may already be authorized or funded through fiscal year 1977, and therefore do not require new legislation. Your views as to funding levels for these ongoing programs are, however, equally as important to the Budget Committee as your recommendations regarding new legislation.

The Congressional Budget Office and General Accounting Office are working to provide committees with budgetary data for such ongoing programs. These data should assist you in determining new budget authority and outlays for continuing programs not requiring reauthorization or amendment in 1977.

(3) Presidential Proposals

Your Committee may wish to discuss its views regarding major estimates and proposals in the President's Budget for 1977. It would be helpful if your report would compare these proposals with your Committee's recommendations, both with respect to program directions and dollar amounts.

(3)

(4) Priority Recommendations

As all of us in the Senate are well aware, it rarely is possible to fund all deserving programs. In developing the First Concurrent Resolution and the allocation of budget authority and outlays to the various legislative committees, it will be necessary to make many priority decisions among competing recommendations. Therefore, we would appreciate your report's indicating those items which are considered to be "top priority" for fiscal year 1977.

(5) New Legislation Affecting Fiscal Year 1978 and Beyond

Your report may be used to discuss any views and estimates your Committee wishes to provide regarding new legislation with major impacts in fiscal years subsequent to 1977. Our Committee is particularly concerned about "wedges"--legislation which will have a substantially greater impact in future years than in 1977.

A number of committees have asked us for specific guidance on the form for the March 15 report. In response, we have developed standard forms--one for budget authority and outlays, and one for tax items and offsetting receipts--which you may wish to complete and attach to the narrative portion of your Committee's March 15 report. These forms will help the Budget Committee develop a standard basis for weighing recommendations from all committees. We urge you to use them if you believe they will help clarify your recommendations to us. Doug Bennet, the Budget Committee Staff Director, is sending sample forms to your staff director under separate cover. He will also supply lists of the new programs and major reductions proposed by the President, for use in connection with item (3) above.

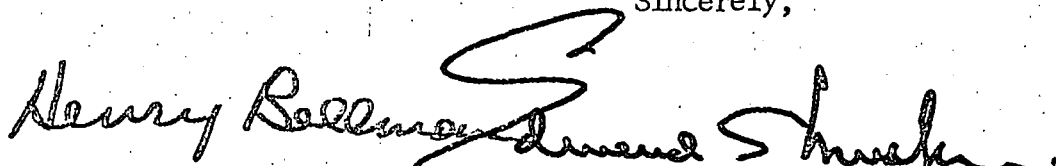
If your members or staff have any questions regarding the report, or if our staff can be of assistance with any aspect of it, please contact Doug Bennet (224-0642), Sid Brown (224-0560), or Mike West (224-0561).

We very much appreciate your Committee's assistance over the past year in making the new Congressional budget process a viable and meaningful way of determining Congressional budget priorities.

We look forward to working with you on the fiscal year 1977 budget.

With best wishes, we are

Sincerely,



Henry Bellmon
Ranking Minority Member

Edmund S. Muskie
Chairman