

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

November 1, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: H. R. HALDEMAN
FROM: WILLIAM E. TIMMONS *W.E.T.*
SUBJECT: Congressional Relations Staff

Attached is a paper outlining my observations of and recommendations for the Office of Congressional Relations.

Should the President wish to retain me in my present position, I would like to discuss with you some necessary staff changes and functional improvements to strengthen the Office.

Please let me know if you need an elaboration of any points in this report.

Attachment

STAFF ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

The Office of the President of the United States has a number of tools which can be used in furthering the legislative goals of the Chief Executive. They may conveniently be called the nine P's:

- Persuasion - argue the merits of the bill
- Prestige - awe of the Presidency
- Politics - control over Party machinery
- Programs - desire to solve problems
- Projects - pork barrel for back home
- Patronage - jobs for friends and supporters
- Power - budget, weapons systems, treaties, judiciary, etc.
- Publicity - command of national media
- Private groups - influences and mobilizes outside lobbies

Since the Executive Office was created to provide the President with extra arms, ears, hands, brains, and time to enable him to make major decisions, his nine tools are also our basic resources, and they are touched upon in different sections of this paper.

PERSONNEL

The President's Congressional Relations staff is experienced, capable, and loyal.

This is one office whose personnel absolutely require experience. The staff has a detailed knowledge of Congress, its customs, operations, rules, and procedures; an understanding of individual Members, their motivations, philosophy and ambitions; and an appreciation of Capitol Hill politics and public relations.

The Congressional staff has accomplished a great deal, considering its hostile constituency, during the President's first term. This achievement has often been judged by its successes in stopping bad legislation more than in passing the President's program. However, over four years, the record shows the victories have been substantial.

This office has also been an integral part of the White House staff system and has always cooperated fully in its staff responsibility.

The personnel are fiercely loyal to the President, have not built a record of self-aggrandizement or resorted to criticism of our colleagues. Harmful press leaks from the Congressional Relations staff have been few and never deliberate.

Members of this Office must exercise patience and restraint in dealing with angry and uncooperative Senators and Representatives. As difficult as this has been at times, the staff has never caused personal animosity resulting in embarrassment to the President. To the contrary, this office has been a valuable "buffer" to the President, taking the heat on the front lines.

It should be noted that while the professional staff of the President and his office has increased in size since the Johnson Administration, the Congressional Relations office has not, even though President Nixon faced an opposition-controlled Congress during his first term.

WORKLOAD

The Office of Congressional Relations is among the most active in the White House. On a typical day when Congress is in session, we receive approximately 400 incoming telephone calls and place 600 outgoing; we process about 200 pieces of paper (correspondence, memoranda, action reports, etc.); we make an average of six trips to Capitol Hill; and attend four White House staff meetings (including the regular 7:30 a. m. and 8:15 a. m. sessions).

There is an average of 15 votes, somewhere in the legislative system, during a Congressional day. This includes action on the floors of both chambers, committees, subcommittees, conferences, and their reports. Of course, all 15 do not have to be monitored or influenced by the White House, but many are important and require attention by the Congressional staff.

Our activity is usually done under intense pressure from both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue. Without personally living through the workload and demands, it is difficult for the casual observer to appreciate the volume and diversity of activity carried on by this Office.

GENERAL PROBLEMS

There are some 300 committees in Congress--including special, select, joint, and sub-committee. Each has its own membership, method of operation, jurisdiction, and tradition. Power is therefore diffused and effective liaison more difficult.

The emphasis in Congress is on individuals, not organizations or groupings. Therefore, two Members of the same party from similar Congressional districts may vote and act quite differently. Relations with Members must consider, therefore, traits, personality, and ambition as well as the usual measurement of philosophy, party loyalty, and special interest.

As a rule, votes in Congress are seen by Members as final acts, where in the Executive branch, enactment frequently is only the beginning of a program's administration. This fact is important since we have to deal with the tactician rather than the strategist. Members are trained at ways of passing bills of interest to them, and must be "horse traders" adept at compromise and "log rolling." The Executive, on the other hand, must be concerned with what is in the broad public interest, not what may appeal to a narrow Congressional constituency.

One last observation: the leadership in both Houses--on both sides of the aisle--is extremely weak. Carl Albert and Mike Mansfield were on the losing side of votes more often than the President. This is a mixed blessing, for while the opposition has been unable to mount a unified front or develop alternatives to the President's programs, we cannot count on the leadership when it supports the President to deliver votes for us. In short, we have to not only get leaders' support or neutralize them, but lobby each Member for his vote. This especially is true in the Senate.

REWARD OR CULTIVATE

Relations with Congressmen can be approached in either of two ways:

1. Reward for supporters, "scratching their backs," in many ways to show the President takes care of his own, and conversely punishing those who oppose the President.

or

2. A deliberate effort to woo opponents, taking for granted our own supporters, in hopes of winning new friends.

Under normal circumstances a Chief Executive with a Congressional minority would utilize the latter tactic in an effort to build a practical majority. However, in the first term, we used a defensive combination by rewarding friends, but not really punishing enemies and no deliberate attempt was made to pull defectors into our ranks.

We can expect greater defections and more vocal opposition in the next Congress, if that's possible, from Brooke, Case, Percy, Hatfield, Pearson, Stevens, and some House Members who, being re-elected, may exert their independence even more than in the past. The liberal wing, playing 1976 politics, may try to publicly position themselves as alternatives to the Vice President.

I believe the President should follow the reward-punishment course in the 93rd Congress. This strength can reap rewards as long as the hard-core is steadfast.

VETO STRATEGY

1973 appears to be a year of major budget concerns as the President works to hold expenditures in line with federal income. It is not anticipated that many new spending proposals will be recommended by the Administration. This fact argues for a viable veto strategy.

With political blackmail removed from the President's second term, he will be able to veto objectionable measures with more freedom. To make the threat of a veto work to our advantage in "cleaning up" legislation and appropriations, the President must be assured of one-third plus one in either House. Even this past year, a hard threat of veto has worked to our advantage on occasion.

Therefore, we must cultivate the hard, loyal support of sufficient Members to sustain vetoes. This can be best done through a reward-punish attitude toward Members.

LOBBYISTS

It is estimated that there are over 1500 professional lobbyists in Washington. They include former Members of Congress like Tom Kuchel, ex-LBJ and Kennedy aides, Andrew Biemiller of the AFL-CIO, John Gardner of Common Cause, and Clarence Mitchell of NAACP.

Corporations and unions have them, public and private institutions have them, business and trade associations have them, and consumer and tax groups use local lobbyists.

Frequently, these lobbyists have special interests in legislation that do not coincide with the Administration. A coalition of effective lobbyists against our position can be extremely difficult to overcome.

The White House must take the outside groups into consideration and better mobilize their support when appropriate. One member of the Congressional staff, in addition to other duties, should be responsible for developing legislative assistance from these private lobbyists.

STAFF PRESTIGE

As a matter of law, White House staff have no power of their own since the President cannot really share his statutory functions. This, coupled with the frequent "Congress be damned" attitude, makes it imperative that the President become more personally involved in supporting his legislation while at the same time building the prestige-- at least in Members' minds--of the Congressional Relations staff. This will also relieve the burdens on the President and other staff members who should be free from Members' telephone calls, correspondence, project requests, etc.

To be effective the President's Congressional staff must be perceived as having close communication with him and able to speak for him.

PARTY LOYALTY

As a general rule, most Hill Republicans support their President on the crunch issues. The exceptions are well-known. In the section on "Reward and Cultivate" the need for maximum support is defined. Additionally, there are several tactics which, if implemented, would be beneficial.

The Senate and House GOP Policy committees should be asked to take public positions in support of key Presidential programs. Party loyalty, then, can be measured against those reports.

Careful thought should be given to ways that the Congressional Campaign Committees could assist in demanding loyalty. Perhaps they would not give financial, public relations, and managerial support to Republicans who fall below a 75% support index. Also, the White

House Personnel Office could use this same gauge in determining "clearance" and acceptance of personnel recommendations. The Departments, too, would be made aware of the voting index for favors they may be in a position to dispense.

After a few months, this system would separate the men from the boys and could build a greater loyalty to the President.

DEPARTMENTAL OFFICES

With the exception of several Congressional Relations officers, legislative personnel in the departments and agencies are almost worthless.

The volume and press of important business before Congressional Committees demand that the President be fully supported by the Congressional offices in the bureaucracy. In the past, the White House has had to fill the vacuum created by lazy, inept, unprofessional, and sometimes disloyal personnel in the departments.

This must be changed and two suggestions are offered: elevate all positions to full Assistant Secretaryships to attract better qualified individuals and force Cabinet officers to accept nominees from the White House. Assistant Secretary posts carry Presidential charters and imply responsibility to the President. Too often, legislative liaison people without adequate experience have been named by department-agency heads.

It would be worthwhile for one member of this office to devote full-time to coordinating and managing the departmental liaison force.

LEADERSHIP OFFICES

Great opportunities are presented through floor assistants to the Vice President, and Republican Leaders in the House and Senate. From their inside vantage points and privileges, these men could make tremendous contributions to the success of the President's legislation on Capitol Hill. While, no doubt, they have served their patrons well, they do not always, or adequately, respond to White House concerns and requests.

It is probably unrealistic to expect Scott and Ford to give up these positions to our people, but the President should consider asking the Vice President to relinquish his legislative aide to us for a better representative in the Senate.

TIMING

Congress and the Presidency see their workload with different time perspectives. Members of the legislative branch look on their term as just one step in a long public career. Therefore, they view legislation as a tool to further their standing with constituents, colleagues in Congress, special interest groups, etc. The President, on the other hand, sees his term as the relevant unit for action. The President needs to spend his resources for immediate accomplishment; the Congressman saves his resources until he needs it.

While we are in many respects at the mercy of Democratic Committee Chairmen, greater attention must be given to detailed planning of the legislative calendar so important measures are recommended, pushed, and enacted in the time frame established by the President.

GRASS ROOTS

In the past we missed opportunities for exerting pressure on key Members of Congress through opinion molders and power centers in their states and districts.

Attention should be given to development of communications with Republican Party leaders, former Committee to Re-Elect the President personnel, Democrats for Nixon, and certain trusted Federal appointees in the field who can act as contact points for information which may be useful in building constituent pressure on Congressmen in behalf of the President's legislation.

One member of the Congressional Relations staff should be responsible for developing these state-local contacts and planning for their use as necessary.

COMPUTERS

This office innovated a legislative tracking system through the use of computers. The status of major bills is constantly updated with information on the history of measures of importance.

We are now ready to go into phase two which is a listing of Members and how they have voted on issues. This second effort will eventually enable us to simulate votes based on past patterns. While it cannot be

failsafe, it will provide this office with reasonable prospects for floor passage. To be properly developed, one man should devote full-time to the management of computer information.

POLICY INPUT

Relations between the Congressional staff and other White House sections is excellent and information has been fully interchanged. Nevertheless, this office should continue to be consulted during the early stages of policy formulation to help "tailor" proposals to greater Congressional acceptance. Also, drafts of statements, messages, and other papers going to the President should be "staffed out" with this office for comment or recommendation from the perspective of Congress. Also the Assistant to the President for Congressional Relations should sit in on Domestic Council, NSC, CIEP, and OMB meetings when legislation is discussed.

There is a tendency for other White House units to "dabble" in Congressional relations, sometimes to the detriment of the President's over-all legislative goals. Effort must be made to channel all official Hill contacts through this Office.

We can do a better job in keeping the Press Office informed of upcoming votes and in interpreting past actions of Congress. A clear-cut "line" should be carefully thought out and conveyed to the Press Secretary on each issue. This has been done in the past on a "catch as catch can" basis, but a workable system must be developed for the 93rd Congress.