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Office of National Service - FOIA [Freedom of Information Act] Status [2]: [Memo to the POTUS re: Strategy of the National Service Proposal]

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June 1, 1989

ACTION MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

THROUGH: FREDERICK D. MCCLURE

FROM: C. GREGG PETERSMEYER

SUBJECT: Strategy of the President's National Service Bill

I. ACTION-FORCING EVENT:

As you can see from the attached New York Times editorial, "Points of Light, Growing Dimmer" (5/26/89), the American people are anxiously awaiting your bold national service initiative and expectations continue to rise. Your commitment to community service has generated substantial congressional interest in this area and has accelerated the process on Capitol Hill, as the new Congress has introduced no fewer than 22 bills which address some element of this subject.

The objective of your national service legislation is to establish a foundation and secure \$25 million in federal funds to be matched by the private sector. It will be necessary to negotiate on a bipartisan basis in order to secure this funding.

II. ANALYSIS:

Currently in the Senate, Labor Chairman Kennedy has taken control of this issue and is pushing hard to build consensus for an omnibus national service package with a \$300 - \$600 million annual price tag. While the centerpiece of this bill is Senator Kennedy's school-based community service program, it also includes components of competing bills, as well as increased funding for VISTA and the Older American Volunteer programs administered by ACTION. The compromise is scheduled to be reported out around June 15 and, with or without the Administration's piece, it is likely that this bill could pass both houses.

If the White House does not engage in this process, it is possible that an expensive bill which does not represent any of the philosophy behind your proposal will pass and, given your commitment to national service, will be very difficult to veto. In addition, it is unlikely that the White House will be unable to secure funding without negotiating with the majority.

Senator Kennedy and his staff have approached the Office of National Service and Roger Porter on numerous occasions and would like to include our bill in the omnibus package. They are willing to discuss keeping the price down and compromising on certain elements of their bill. If he can reach agreement, Kennedy would like to proceed with mark-up sometime in late-June.

As you know, it is imperative to have committed and strong congressional leadership on our bill, and the directive to these members should come directly from you. Our national service bill by itself will face considerable challenge on the Hill, as well as criticism from the Democrats for being too fiscally meager. It is unlikely that our bill will pass through the Senate or House without the addition of multiple other undesirable provisions.

Republican Members of Congress are waiting patiently for your leadership and initiative. Ultimately, we will be faced with the question, how much are we prepared to pay to secure our bill?

In addition, because of the uncertain outcome of the legislative process, the existence of your foundation should not be entirely dependent upon legislation, and therefore should be established when the bill is introduced in such a way that it can receive a Congressional appropriation later in the year.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS:

We recommend that you meet around June 8th with a small group of carefully selected GOP Senators and Representatives (8-10) to consult regarding developing our legislation and to ask them to take a leadership role in taking your message of national service to the people and in building support in Congress.

1. DECISION:

☐ Approve	☐ Disapprove
☐ Approve as Amended	☐ No Action

We recommend that a foundation be established which can go forward, with, or without, congressional authorizations or appropriations, in the event that we are unable to reach an acceptable agreement with Congress.

2. DECISION:

☐ Approve	☐ Disapprove
☐ Approve as Amended	☐ No Action