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Wednesday, August 25, 1999

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KEVIN SMITH

SENATOR
7TH DISTRICT

1609 COKER-HAMPTON DRIVE
STUTTGART, ARKANSAS 72160



THE SENATE
STATE OF ARKANSAS

Stacy Sec.
COMMITTEES
MEMBER:
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
AGING & LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

8/25/99

SEND TO
SCHEDULING

August 16, 1999

Hon. William Jefferson Clinton
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500-2000

Dear President Clinton:

First of all, I want to thank you for all that you have tried to do for the Delta and for all you are trying to do now. Your visit to both Clarksdale and Helena have already done so much for the Delta by raising the nation's awareness to this vital issue, and I want you to know how proud we all are that you are our President.

As you recall, at the Helena meeting, when we presented you with a petition for help signed by over 130 local elected officials and citizens from the Arkansas Delta, you agreed to meet with the Delta Caucus at the White House the week of October 4, 1999. The purpose of the meeting will be to kick-off a week of activities in Washington for the Delta Caucus "March on Washington" and to continue the focus on the Delta that you began.

We are expecting several hundred people (approximately 250 to 500) from the region, and would envision a "rally style" event on the South Lawn of the White House with a speech from you about the need for Congress to adopt your "New Markets" initiative and other legislation introduced to help the Delta. If your staff would make this the "issue of the day" at the White House, it would do a lot to attract media attention and position this issue in a way that would put those like Senator Trent Lott on the defensive. I know you agree that it is indefensible for him to oppose such an effort when he represents the poorest state in the Delta and the poorest in the country.

Our plans for the rest of the week include "marching" down Pennsylvania Avenue to Capitol Hill, followed by appearances before the Congressional Delta Caucus and various committees. We will fan out on the Hill and visit every congressional office as well. On Wednesday, we are planning a press conference on Capitol Hill to discuss the results of the "march" and to allow congressional supporters to speak on the issue.

Mr. President, your continued focus on this issue is a political win/win. If it works, you have left a significant legacy of solving yet another supposedly "unsolvable problem" among a long and distinguished list of other domestic problems you have solved. You will have fulfilled the agenda begun by FDR and continued by people like Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King.

If this doesn't work, we have put some important Republicans on the defensive before an

election year in which they are already without any issues. It could make the difference in many Republican held House Districts in the Delta, where it could be argued that the Republican Leadership is not interested in helping. Some of these districts could go either way next year, and could contribute to returning the House to Democratic control. For example, Congresswoman JoAnn Emerson (R-MO) from Southeast Missouri actively fought your proposal last year for \$26 million for a Delta Regional Commission (even writing a letter to the Chairman of Appropriations). Governor Kirk Fordice of Mississippi wrote a letter signed by several Republican Governors in opposition to your Delta Commission proposal. While I was visiting the Delta congressional delegation in support of your proposal, I was shocked by the opposition to it by congressmen from the very region it would have done so much to help.

In short, Mr. President, if we do nothing else but expose this sort of thing to the folks back home, and thereby get a new Congress that is more sensitive to the Delta's plight, then you would have accomplished much.

Mr. President, you and I have been working on this issue for a long time now. Please help us. The most important and most humanitarian thing you can do for our state is to help the area that is holding it back both economically and socially. Indeed, as you said yourself in Helena, the best thing you can do for the entire country right now is to help those areas that are still not participating in the Clinton economic boom.

Again, thank you so much for coming to Helena, and for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to being in touch with your staff, and to seeing you in October.

Sincerely,



Kevin A. Smith, Co-Chair
Delta Caucus

cc: Stephanie Street, WH Director of Scheduling; Rep. Joe Harris, Delta Caucus.

— Remember what Tip O'Neil said about all politics being local. Your visit and this Caucus & March have become hot political issues as well with local leaders and coffee shops in the region. If they don't deliver on your challenge to help, it will be a big issue in the races in MO., MS., LA., and in the race to unseat Jay Dickey in ARK. Thanks!