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HR 10704

House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Eighty-Seventh Congress
Washington, D.C.

December 9, 1961

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Honorable John F. Kennedy
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

Since 1938 there has been only one regular session of Congress that was not over 200 days in length. I do not know of any Member who disagrees with the thought that this is longer than need be to accomplish the work of the Congress in any but war years and, more importantly, is undermining the very basic principal of representative government upon which our country was founded.

No Member can truly represent the people of his District without spending a considerable amount of time with them; nor can he fulfill his responsibilities to his people and country without being present and participating in proceedings when the Congress is in session. I am of the firm opinion that with these long, drawn-out sessions of Congress he cannot do both.

The Congress realized the danger this poses to our very form of government when it passed the Reorganization Act of 1946 providing, with exceptions, that Congress must adjourn no later than the last day of July each year. The trouble has been the exceptions, which have been stretched to the point of making this provision of law almost meaningless.

I realize that this is primarily a problem Congress itself must solve. During the past several months I have talked about this with many Members in positions of leadership and I believe that the will to abide by the obvious intention of this provision of the Reorganization Act and adjourn by July 31 is stronger now than it has been at any time since World War II. My intention is to keep prodding others toward this end and to set a personal example, as Chairman of the Labor-Health, Education and Welfare appropriations subcommittee, by getting work I am responsible for handled expeditiously.

While this is primarily a problem for the Congress itself to solve, the solution will be much facilitated by cooperation from the Executive Branch. I have seen example after example of important legislative recommendations

work file

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from the Executive Branch being delayed for weeks and months by inaction or by quibbling between agencies and between divisions of the same agency. Even the President's annual budget is seldom ready until the legal deadline has practically arrived. And a bad practice that has developed into almost standard procedure is to submit, later in the session, amendments and requests for supplemental appropriations that could have been included in the annual budget.

From the years that I worked with you in Congress and from observation of your other activities I know you to be a man of unusual energy and vigor who abhors unnecessary delay in accomplishing any job. My comments regarding delays in Executive recommendations for Congressional action apply largely to experience prior to your assuming the office of President and not at all to you personally. My only purpose in writing to you about this matter is to encourage you to do all you can to inculcate in those responsible for assisting you in preparing recommendations to the Congress, the same fervor you have for getting the job done. With cooperation I am sure that we can make it possible for the elected representatives of the people of this country to be with them more and so be cognizant of and better represent their needs, beliefs, and opinions.

With best personal wishes,

Sincerely yours,

John E. Fogarty, Chairman
Labor-H.E.W. Subcommittee