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• Jimmy Carter

Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 Remarks on Signing H.R. 6410 Into Law.

December 11th, 1980

THE PRESIDENT. This is the kind of bill when at least everybody in the room is smiling. [Laughter] And a lot of people who are not here are not very pleased with this legislation, but I think it's very important to our country.

I'm very delighted to have Senator Chiles and Chairman Jack Brooks, Frank Horton, and others who've worked so hard on this legislation, and after I've signed the bill I'd like to ask them to make a comment.

This legislation, which is known as the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980, is the latest and one of the most important steps that we have taken to eliminate wasteful and unnecessary Federal paperwork and also to eliminate unnecessary Federal regulations. In the first meeting that I had in this room in 1977 with my Cabinet, I directed all of the members of the Cabinet and major agency leaders to cut down on the amount of paperwork that the Federal Government placed upon the American people as an extraordinary and unnecessary burden. Two years later, because of that effort, we had cut the amount of time that Americans spend on Federal paperwork by 15 percent and had also created some new tools in the executive decision alone which could restrict any further increase in the paperwork burden. The Office of Management and Budget was given this responsibility.

We began, for instance, a paperwork budget, the first one that our Nation had ever seen, which meant that an agency had to justify to the Office of Management and Budget and to me as President any increase in the information that they derived from American citizens or the American free-enterprise members. This had to be approved ahead of time, just as approval was achieved for the expenditure of Federal moneys.

We set up this new budget in the Office of Management and Budget, this new unit, in order to cut paperwork again and to continue to eliminate unnecessary regulations. Last year, in order to establish this procedure firmly into the laws of our Nation as an extension to an Executive order, and also to expand it and to make it more effective, we asked the Congress to strengthen the Federal Reports Act by requiring that all Federal agencies clear their paperwork requirements with the Office of Management and Budget. We found ready support on the Hill, particularly among those who will speak after I'm finished.

The act I'm signing today will not only regulate the regulators, but it will also allow the President, through the Office of Management and Budget, to gain better control over the Federal Government's appetite for information from the public. For the first time it allows OMB to have the final word on many of the regulations issued by our Government. It also ensures that the public need not fill out forms nor keep records which are not previously approved by OMB.

This legislation is another important step in our efforts to trim waste from the Federal Government and to see to it that the Government operates more efficiently for all our citizens. In scope, it stands with the civil service reform and the deregulation of trucking and rails and airlines and other industries. And in spirit, it stands with the designation of the Inspectors General to attack waste and with the requirement that agencies write their rules in understandable English and study the impact of these regulations on small businesses.

We have made a great deal of progress through executive action over a 4-year period. This new action, embedding my own philosophy and the philosophy of those behind me into the laws of our Nation, will perpetuate this progress and will enhance the progress even further in the future.

I'm very delighted now to sign this legislation, following which I would like to ask Chairman Jack Brooks to make a few remarks, if he's willing to do so.

[The President signed the bill as Representative Brooks spoke.]

REPRESENTATIVE BROOKS. I'd be honored, Mr. President, and to say first that certainly you ought to be commended for your courage in presenting this program—in working on it, in encouraging it, and in signing it in spite of solid opposition from the usual bureaucrats who are against—[laughter]—any management proposals. In 1965, with the ADP proposition on computers, that has saved the Government billions of dollars, we had the same pressure from some of the same bureaucrats just fighting President Johnson—and they've fought you. But you had the courage to do it, because you know that this bill is a landmark of your administration and will help to get a handle on 10 to 15 percent of the Federal budget that we spend on information and paper processing.

It is the most important legislation that you have passed and that we have been able to work on. It will help this Government run the information upon which decisions are made that cost billions of dollars a year.

Thank you, sir.

THE PRESIDENT. Lawton Chiles.

SENATOR CHILES. Mr. President, you mentioned that this was one of the first things that you talked about in your Cabinet meeting. It was also one of the things that you talked about on the stump all over the country when you were campaigning. I think this is certainly a promise fulfilled, and I'm delighted to have had a chance to participate in that.

Frank Horton and Tom McIntyre headed up a Paperwork Commission, and this was the cornerstone of the recommendations from the Paperwork Commission. Elmer Staats in the GAO has been tremendous support to us as we fought some of those bureaucrats, Senator Danforth, working with me on our House side, and I also want to compliment the staffs of Jack Brooks and my staff and all the staffs that worked on this, because they did a yeoman's task too. And I'm delighted to participate with Jack Brooks. When you get him working on something, you know he's going to take care of his side. You've just got to worry about your side. [Laughter]

I think we've got a good bill, and I think what now we have is the framework that is there for an administration to really implement it, and really do something about paperwork.

Tar. PRESIDENT. I'll always remember the day that Frank Horton and Tom McIntyre and Elmer Staats and others brought the paperwork report into my office, which was a very good and reassuring report and one that's been a basis of this legislation. Frank, I'd like to ask you to say a word.

REPRESENTATIVE HORTON. Mr. President, this is an honor for me to participate in this ceremony, and as one of the original authors of the bill it's a great pleasure to be here and to see you sign your name to this very important piece of legislation, which as you point out is going to be a very landmark piece of legislation in your administration.

It is true that in October of 1977 as the Chairman of the Paperwork Commission, I presented to you the report of the Paperwork Commission. Many of those people are here. Tom McIntyre, as you pointed out, was a member of the Commission from the Senate. Senator Bill Brock was also a member, and then when he left the Senate, Senator Hatfield was a member. On the House side, Tom Steed was a great support and was a member of the Commission also, and I'm sorry he's not here. I think he did have an invitation but he's just not here, but he did a lot too.

Mr. Staats and other members of the Commission, people who are in this room now worked with the Commission, and I might say parenthetically, it's one Commission that self-destructed. It was to be in existence for 2 years. It did self-destruct in those 2 years. It started October 1975. It went out of existence in 1977, and furthermore, we turned back \$1.4 million that we didn't spend that had been appropriated. But from the outset, Bert Lance as your OMB Director, his successor, Jim McIntyre, and then of course, with your tremendous support, this legislation has been now signed into law.

We said in 1977 that the cost of paperwork was \$100 billion a year to the Federal Government and business, small business and large business, and this is the culmination, really, of the work of the Paperwork Commission—is this legislation which is going to put in place an office which can carry on the thing that you've started, namely to try to cut back on this tremendous amount of paperwork. And, Mr. President, in this you have completely succeeded, and I want to congratulate you and thank you for your leadership in this field.

THE PRESIDENT. With you as partners, there's no way I could have failed. Thank you very much. As you say, we've addressed the bureaucrats, and we've won, right? [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:15 a.m. at the signing ceremony in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

As enacted, H.R. 6410 is Public Law 96-511, approved December 11.

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