

Memorandum on the Freedom of Information Act

October 4, 1993

Memorandum for Heads of Departments and Agencies

Subject: The Freedom of Information Act

I am writing to call your attention to a subject that is of great importance to the American public and to all Federal departments and agencies—the administration of the Freedom of Information Act, as amended (the “Act”). The Act is a vital part of the participatory system of government. I am committed to enhancing its effectiveness in my Administration.

For more than a quarter century now, the Freedom of Information Act has played a unique role in strengthening our democratic form of government. The statute was enacted based upon the fundamental principle that an informed citizenry is essential to the democratic process and that the more the American people know about their government the better they will be governed. Openness in government is essential to accountability and the Act has become an integral part of that process.

The Freedom of Information Act, moreover, has been one of the primary means by which members of the public inform themselves about their government. As Vice President Gore made clear in the National Performance Review, the

American people are the Federal Government’s customers. Federal departments and agencies should handle requests for information in a customer-friendly manner. The use of the Act by ordinary citizens is not complicated, nor should it be. The existence of unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles has no place in its implementation.

I therefore call upon all Federal departments and agencies to renew their commitment to the Freedom of Information Act, to its underlying principles of government openness, and to its sound administration. This is an appropriate time for all agencies to take a fresh look at their administration of the Act, to reduce backlogs of Freedom of Information Act requests, and to conform agency practice to the new litigation guidance issued by the Attorney General, which is attached.

Further, I remind agencies that our commitment to openness requires more than merely responding to requests from the public. Each agency has a responsibility to distribute information on its own initiative, and to enhance public access through the use of electronic information systems. Taking these steps will ensure compliance with both the letter and spirit of the Act.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Nomination for Posts at the Department of Defense

October 4, 1993

The President announced his intention today to nominate public health expert Stephen C. Joseph to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs; former Pentagon official Richard Danzig to be Under Secretary of the Navy; and economic policy specialist Joshua Gotbaum to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Economic Security.

“The people who we are adding to our Pentagon team today are recognized experts in their fields and dedicated public servants,” said President Clinton. “I welcome their service at the Department of Defense.”

NOTE: The President also announced the following appointments to senior Defense Department posts not requiring confirmation by the Senate:

Cliff Bernath, Deputy Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Operations

Joel Resnick, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Reserve Affairs/Strategic Plans and Analysis

Helen Forbeck, Senior Professional, Defense Reinvestment Assistance Task Force

John Rogers, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs/Plans & Operations

Mark Wagner, Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Economic Security

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John Goodman, Special Adviser for Defense Conversion and Technology
Sheila Cheston, Deputy General Counsel of the Air Force
Dr. Larry Caviola, Deputy Under Secretary/ Acquisition Operations
Audrey Sheppard, Chief of Protocol
Steven Preston, Deputy General Counsel
Sheila Helm, Special Assistant to the Secretary/Personnel
Dr. Kenneth Flamm, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Acquisition (Dual Use Technology and International Programs)
Joseph Berger, Director, Peacekeeping/Peace Enforcement/Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy (Democracy and Peacekeeping)

Robert Bayer, Deputy Assistant Secretary/ Economic Reinvestment and Base Realignment and Closure
Carolyn Becraft, Deputy Assistant Secretary/ Personnel & Readiness (Personnel Support, Families & Education)
Mary Ellen Harvey, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary/Logistics Systems Development
Roy Willis, Principal Assistant Deputy Under Secretary/Logistics
Amy Hickox, Director of Outreach America/ Office of the Assistant Secretary (Reserve Affairs)

Biographies of the nominees were made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the American Association of Retired Persons in Culver City, California

October 5, 1993

The President. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you all for coming today. I want to thank Judy Brown and the other board members of the AARP up here and the AARP nationwide for their wonderful cooperation and work with the First Lady and our health care effort over the last several months.

There is no organization in America that better represents the needs and desires of older Americans than the AARP. I've been working with them for nearly 20 years now, and it won't be long until I'll be old enough to be a member. [*Laughter*] So I have a vested interest in your lobbying on the health care plan.

I want to thank especially Mayor Mike Balkman and the people here in Culver City for their warm welcome to all of us today. I thank the Mayor. I'd also like to say a special word of thanks to your Representative in the United States Congress who's here with me, and a great Congressman, and a great ally in this fight for health care security, Congressman Julian Dixon. Congressman.

There are some people here from Congressman Waxman's district. I told him yesterday that since he had a longtime standing interest in health care I would mention today that the reason he's not here is that he's back in Washington

having the next hearing on health care. So he took a redeye back last night to do the work that we have to do.

Ladies and gentlemen, as all of you know by now, we have launched a major national debate on health care, with a proposal designed to achieve a disarmingly simple but exceedingly complicated task: to provide health security for all Americans, health care that can never be taken away, that's always there, for the first time in our history and to do it by trying to fix what is wrong with our system while keeping and indeed enhancing what is right with our system.

The first and foremost thing is we have to have more health care security. There is an article today on the front page of many of the papers of the United States saying that last year there were more Americans living in poverty than at any time since 1962; that 37.4 million Americans have no health insurance; about 2 million Americans a month lose it, about 100,000 of them permanently because the system we have is coming unraveled. It is the most expensive system in the world and yet the only advanced nation which doesn't provide basic coverage to all Americans.

We have gotten 700,000 letters to date, and