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Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

## STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

In response to the many problems confronting handicapped Americans and in accordance with Public Law 93-516, I am calling a White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals to be held in December, 1976.

A major purpose of this conference is to generate a responsive national awareness of the problems facing the handicapped.

Concern for the handicapped is not unique to the Federal Government. State and local officials and private citizens must also turn their attention to the needs of the handicapped.

The private sector can perform a creative role by contributing its talents and resources.

It is appropriate that in the Bicentennial Year the Federal Government focus attention on the needs of our handicapped citizens. Action to alleviate these needs will be a major purpose of the Conference. Along with my colleagues in the Congress and State and local governments, I look forward to receiving those recommendations.

There are more than seven million children and at least 28 million adults in America with physical or mental handicaps. An estimated total of only 800,000 handicapped persons are employed. Thus, employment of the handicapped, and related personal and social problems, must be examined and creative solutions developed. I urge all Americans to support and to participate actively in this great human endeavor.

In accordance with the act, a 28-member National Planning and Advisory Council to the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals has been appointed.

This Council includes outstanding individuals with impressive backgrounds relating to problems arising from handicapping conditions. Among the Council members are educators, rehabilitation specialists, medical personnel, social workers, Government officials, families of handicapped individuals and consumers.

Dr. Henry Viscardi, Jr., of Kings Point, Long Island, has been appointed Chairman of the Council and will direct the White House Conference. Many members of the Council are handicapped individuals whose handicap has not precluded outstanding personal and professional achievement.

Jack F. Smith of Rochester, New York, has been named Executive Director of the planning staff. Like Dr. Viscardi, he is handicapped and nationally known for his professional accomplishments.

Administrative responsibility for the Conference rests with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. I have requested that all Federal agencies cooperate fully with Secretary Mathews.

The White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals is a very worthwhile endeavor. Its results should contribute significantly to the health, education and welfare of handicapped individuals everywhere.