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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

FACT SHEET

THE SCHOOL DESEGREGATION STANDARDS
AND ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1976

The President today is sending legislation to Congress to
improve the Nation's ability to deal with elementary and
secondary public school desegregation.

BACKGROUND

The proposed legislation is the result of an eight-month
review of school desegregation. In November, 1975, President
Ford directed Attorney General Levi and Secretary Mathews to
consider ways to minimize court-ordered busing. The President
also stressed the need to assist local school districts in
achieving desegregation before court action commenced.

Recently, President Ford has held a series of meetings with
outside sources to discuss the recommendation resulting from
the review. These meetings have included school board repre-
sentatives, academic and educational experts, community
leaders who have dealt with desegregation on the local level,
civil rights leaders, members of Congress, and Cabinet officers.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LEGISLATION

The School Desegregation Standards and Assistance Act of 1976,
in order to maintain progress toward the orderly elimination
of illegal segregation in our public schools, and to preserve --
or, where appropriate, restore -- community control of schools,
would:

    1. Require that a court in a desegregation case
        determine the extent to which acts of unlawful
        discrimination have caused a greater degree of
        racial concentration in a school or school sys-
        tem than would have existed in the absence of
        such acts;

    2. Require that busing and other remedies in
        school desegregation cases be limited to
        eliminating the degree of student racial
        concentration caused by proven unlawful
        acts of discrimination,

    3. Require that the utilization of court-
        ordered busing as a remedy be limited to
        a specific period of time consistent with
        the legislation's intent that it be an
        interim and transitional remedy. In general,
        this period of time will be no longer than
        five years where there has been compliance
        with the court order.

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4. Establish a National Community and Education
   Committee which will assist, encourage, and
   facilitate community involvement in the school
   desegregation process. This Committee will be
   composed of citizens from a wide range of
   occupations and backgrounds, with particular
   emphasis on individuals who have had personal
   experience in school desegregation activities.
   Committee members will assist on request
   communities which are, or will be, engaged
   in the desegregation of their schools by
   sharing ideas and recommendations for
   anticipating and resolving conflicts.

   In addition to providing advice and technical
   assistance, the Committee will be authorized
   to provide grants to community groups for the
   development of constructive local participation
   that will facilitate the desegregation process.
   The Committee will be composed of not less than
   50 nor more than 100 members. Ten of those,
   appointed by the President for fixed terms,
   will serve as an Executive Committee and will
   appoint the balance of the Committee.

PURPOSE OF THE LEGISLATION: LIMITS TO BUSING

The President indicated that where Federal court actions
are initiated to deal with public school desegregation, busing
as a remedy ought to be the last resort and ought to be limited
in scope to correcting the effects of previous violations.

He proposes that Congress join with him in establishing guide-
lines for the lower Federal Courts in the desegregation of
public schools.

The President also indicated his belief that each community
should choose the alternative of voluntarily desegregating
its public schools.

He proposes the establishment of a committee composed of
citizens who have community experience in school desegrega-
tion activities and who are willing to assist other
communities voluntarily desegregate their schools.

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