

REHABILITATION ACT 1972 VETO MESSAGE

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

RETURNING

WITHOUT APPROVAL THE BILL (S. 7) ENTITLED
THE "REHABILITATION ACT OF 1972"



MARCH 27, 1973.—Read and ordered to be printed

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To the Senate of the United States:

I am returning today without my approval S. 7, the "Rehabilitation Act of 1972."

This bill is one of several now before the Congress which mask bad legislation beneath alluring labels.

Their supporters would have the American public believe that each of these bills would further an important social cause, but they neglect to warn the public that the cumulative effect of a Congressional spending spree would be a massive assault upon the pocketbooks of millions of men and women in this country. They also fail to warn us that simply throwing money at problems does not solve anything; it only creates poor legislation which frequently misses the target.

As President, it is my duty to sound the warning—and to defend the public interest by vetoing fiscally irresponsible, badly constructed bills that come to my desk from Capitol Hill. S. 7 is such a bill.

Over the past nineteen months, we have made significant headway toward a goal that has eluded America for nearly two decades: full prosperity without war.

But all of our economic progress—and all of our hopes—will be washed away if we open the floodgates on the Federal budget.

S. 7, if enacted, would result in an increase in Federal outlays of some \$1 billion above my budget recommendations for fiscal years 1973-1975.

To some Members of the Congress, a \$1 billion increase in Federal spending may seem only a small crack in the dam. But there are more than a dozen other bills already before the Congress which also carry extravagant price tags. And more seem likely to follow during the remainder of the year.

If we allow the big spenders to sweep aside budgetary restraints, we can expect an increase of more than \$50 billion in Federal spending before the end of fiscal year 1975. This would force upon us the unacceptable choice of either raising taxes substantially—perhaps as much as 15% in personal income taxes—or inviting a hefty boost in consumer prices and interest rates.

The American people have repeatedly shown that they want to hold a firm line on both prices and taxes. I stand solidly with them. At a time when the world is watching to see if we can demonstrate our willingness to hold down inflation at home while we seek monetary stability abroad, this resolve is more important than ever. I shall therefore veto those big-spending bills which would jeopardize our economic hopes for the future.

I would emphasize that even if S. 7 were not fatally flawed by its large expense, I would have serious reservations about signing it, for it also contains a number of substantive defects. Among them:

—It would divert the Vocational Rehabilitation program from its original purposes by requiring that it provide new medical services. For instance, it would set up a new program for end-stage kidney disease—a worthy concern in itself, but one that can be

approached more effectively within the Medicare program, as existing legislation already provides.

Vocational Rehabilitation has worked well for over half a century by focusing on a single objective: training people for meaningful jobs. We should not dilute the resources of that program or distort its objective by turning it toward welfare or medical goals.

- Secondly, S. 7 would create a hodge-podge of seven new categorical grant programs, many of which would overlap and duplicate existing services. Coordination of services would become considerably more difficult and would place the Federal Government back on the path to wasteful, overlapping program disasters.
- By rigidly cementing into law the organizational structures of the Rehabilitation Services Administration and by confusing the lines of management responsibility, S. 7 would also prevent the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare from carrying forward his efforts to manage vocational rehabilitation services more effectively.
- Finally, by promising increased Federal spending for this program in such a large amount, S. 7 would cruelly raise the hopes of the handicapped in a way that we could never responsibly hope to fulfill.

Through past increases in funding and by our efforts to find more effective means of providing services, this Administration has demonstrated its strong commitment to vocational rehabilitation. Funding for the Vocational Rehabilitation program will reach \$650 million under my budget for the coming fiscal year, an increase of 75 percent over the level of support when I took office. Two other sources of funding for rehabilitation of the handicapped, the Disability Insurance Trust Fund and the new Supplemental Security Income program, will provide another \$100 million. Altogether during the coming fiscal year, the Vocational Rehabilitation program should provide services for about 1.2 million people—an increase of more than 50 percent over the figure of four years ago.

This is a good record and one that provides promise for the future. I shall thus look forward to working with the Congress in developing a more responsible bill that would extend and strengthen the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

This Administration has submitted recommendations to both the 92nd and 93rd Congresses which would accomplish these purposes. The 92nd Congress passed a bill which contained some of my recommendations but was so inordinately expensive that I felt compelled to veto it. In returning S. 7 without my approval, I ask the 93rd Congress now to turn its attention to the substitute recently offered by Representative Earl Landgrebe.

My decision to disapprove S. 7 should be seen by the Congress as more than just an isolated rejection of a single piece of unwisely legislation. It is part of my overall commitment to hold down taxes and prices. I remind the Congress of that determination, I ask the Congress to consider carefully the implications of spend-thrift actions, and I urge the Congress to be more reasonable and responsible in the legislation it passes in the future.

RICHARD NIXON.

THE WHITE HOUSE, *March 27, 1973.*