VETO OF H.R. 7584

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

VETOING

H.R. 7584


December 13, 1980.—Message and accompanying act referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

79-011 O

WASHINGTON : 1980
To the House of Representatives:

I am returning without my signature H.R. 7584, the State-Ju­

stice-Commerce Appropriations Act of 1980. A provision in this Act, 
the Helms-Collins Amendment, would impose an unprecedented 
prohibition on the power of the President of the United States and 
the Attorney General to seek a particular remedy in the Federal 
courts that in some cases may be necessary to ensure that our 
Constitution and laws are faithfully executed.

Throughout my Administration, I have been committed to the 
vigorous enforcement of the Fourteenth Amendment to our Consti­
tution and of our civil rights laws. They are the backbone of our 
commitment to equal justice. All Americans are the beneficiaries of 
over two decades of progress since the Supreme Court upheld the 
constitutional right of all races to equal educational opportunity 
and the Congress passed landmark civil rights legislation to end 
discrimination in voting, housing, employment, education and 
public accommodations. We should not turn back the clock to an 
era when the Department of Justice stood passive and the entire 
burden of seeking a remedy for the infringement of constitutional 
rights fell on the victims of discrimination themselves.

I have often stated my belief that busing should only be used as 
a last resort in school desegregation cases. But busing even as a 
last resort is not the real issue here. The real issue is whether it is 
proper for the Congress to prevent the President from carrying out 
his constitutional responsibility under Article II to enforce the 
Constitution and other laws of the United States.

The precedent that would be established if this legislation 
became law is dangerous. It would effectively allow the Congress to 
tell a President that there are certain constitutionally-mandated 
remedies for the invasion of constitutional rights that he cannot 
ask the courts to apply. If a President can be barred from going to 
the courts on this issue, a future Congress could by similar reason­
ing prevent a President from asking the courts to rule on the 
constitutionality of other laws and the constitutional necessity of 
other remedies upon which the President and the Congress dis­
agree. That would be a most undesirable interference with the 
constitutional separation of powers.

For any President to accept this precedent would gravely en­
croach on the powers of his office. I have a responsibility to my 
successors and to the American people not to permit that encroach­ 
ment to take place. I intend to discharge that responsibility to the 
best of my ability.

JIMMY CARTER.