



COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON D.C. 20548

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March 3, 1981

[Comments on H.R. 18]

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The Honorable Jack Brooks
Chairman, Committee on Government
Operations
U.S. House of Representatives

HSE 01500

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on H.R. 18, a bill to establish a Commission on More Effective Government, which you recently sent to us for comment. I think a commission of this general type could be very useful during this period of our Nation's history. A commission, with broad public and private representation, could help focus public attention, discussion, analysis, and support on the steps that need to be taken to improve our ability to govern ourselves, and to restore public confidence in government at all levels. I urge you to consider this bill and act on a proposal to establish such a commission.

Every viable Nation has a need for periodically renewing its sense of national purpose and of the appropriate role of governmental institutions within that Nation's life. I believe that now is such a time for our Nation, and that a broadly based commission could serve as a catalyst for such national self-renewal. Looking back over my 40 years of Federal Service, there have been few times as opportune as the present for taking stock of the limitations and capabilities of our governmental institutions, and for deliberately choosing the general course we should take over the next several decades to improve our processes of government. A commission could assist greatly in this task by outlining the kinds of steps that need to be taken.

When considering the specific provisions of such a bill, you may want to consider some of the following comments I have on the version before you.

First, I am concerned about the size of the commission. In my opinion, the more effective commissions in the past several decades have been the smaller ones. Scholars who have studied commissions have concluded that smaller commissions tend to meet more often, work harder, resolve their differences more constructively,

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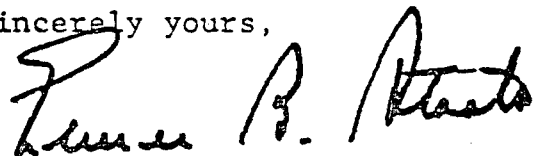
and produce a report more rapidly than large commissions. I think a total membership of twelve--the size of the two Hoover Commissions--rather than the proposed eighteen, is a preferable size. The need for broader representation can be achieved through the use of task forces composed of non-commission members, as was done by the first Hoover Commission.

Second, the bill has a provision that may have undesirable results on the composition of the commission. Section 4 as written would require that nine members of the commission be from private life, of which six would be "* * * individuals not affiliated with any political party" (see Sec. 4(b)(1), (2), and (3)). This provision could have the effect of excluding from membership individuals who are merely registered in a party but hold no office or exercise similar responsibilities in the party. It would be preferable to require that the six individuals not be engaged in party leadership activities or hold a position in a party.

Finally, Section 4(a) provides for membership on the commission only by members of the executive branch and the Congress, and from private life. This would preclude the appointment of members of the judicial branch, the legislative branch support agencies, and State and local governments. I think a commission of this kind should not be precluded from drawing upon appropriate talent and expertise no matter where it may reside.

If I or any of my staff may be of assistance to you during your consideration of this bill, please feel free to contact us. Copies of this letter are being sent to Representative Bolling, who introduced H.R. 18, and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely yours,



Comptroller General
of the United States

cc: The Honorable Richard Bolling
Chairman, Committee on Rules
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable David Stockman
Director, Office of Management
and Budget