

GAO

Report to Chairman, Subcommittee on
Legislative Branch, Committee on
Appropriations, U. S. Senate

November 1989

LEGISLATIVE
BRANCH

Parental Leave
Practices and Child
Care Services



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Human Resources Division

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November 14, 1989

The Honorable Harry Reid
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter provides information on parental leave policies and practices and child care services in the Legislative Branch, with the exception of the House of Representatives, in response to your March 6, 1989, request and subsequent discussions with your staff. Eighty-one Senators' offices responded to our questionnaire, and the 16 standing committees, the Office of the Secretary of the Senate, and the Senate Sergeant at Arms responded to our telephone survey. Our review was conducted between April and July 1989. (See app. I for our review objectives, scope, and methodology.)

Results in Brief

The following are the results of our review.

1. Most of the 81 Senators' offices that responded to our survey, the 16 Senate committees, and Senate offices had established policies for maternity and paternity leave. (See apps. II and III.)
2. Maternity and paternity leave are distinct categories of leave that may be used in lieu of or, in some cases, in addition to annual and sick leave.
3. Maternity and paternity leave policies and practices of Senate committees, offices, and individual Senators varied greatly.
4. Although there were no such leave requests during the review period, about half of the Senators' offices and committees indicated they would allow special leave to care for a seriously ill child.
5. The Legislative Branch agencies (see app. IV), for the most part, have elected to follow Office of Personnel Management (OPM) parental leave guidance, regarding the use of sick, annual (vacation), and leave without pay for childbirth, adoption, or the care of a sick child.

6. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives operate child care centers with a combined enrollment of about 115 children. Among the legislative agencies, only the General Accounting Office (GAO) and the Government Printing Office (GPO) plan to open child care centers, both in 1990. Lack of management support, funding, and space are among the obstacles that impede opening and operating child care centers.

Senate Committees' Parental Leave Policies and Experiences Vary

The amount of maternity or paternity leave allowed by the Senate committees varied widely. For example, the policies allowed a range of 20 to 60 days' maternity leave and up to 20 days' paternity leave. The most common policy was to grant 30 to 40 days' paid maternity leave, and 5 to 10 days' paid paternity leave. Some committees have no prescribed leave amount and handle requests on a case-by-case basis. Also, some committees allow the use of sick and annual leave in addition to paid maternity and paternity leave.

During 1987 and 1988, nine committees received and granted 28 requests for parental leave. Of the 28 requests, 18 were for maternity leave and 5 for paternity; in 5 cases, the type of leave had not been recorded. The leave periods ranged from 15 to 75 days for maternity and 2 to 10 days for paternity. Most leave taken was paid maternity or paternity leave, and was not charged against the committee staffmember's other leave balances. For the most part, other committee staff handled the absent employee's work during the parental leave period. In two cases, another agency's employees were assigned to the committee during the parental leave period at no cost to the committee.

Senators' Offices: Most Have Established Policies

Of the 81 Senators' offices that responded to our questionnaire (see app. VII), 74 have established policies allowing varying amounts of special paid maternity or paternity leave. For example, one office allowed 90 days' leave during which time employees were paid at minimum salaries sufficient to cover only such basic benefits as health and life insurance premiums. Another office allowed employees to accrue up to 90 days' paid maternity leave based in part on the employee's time with the office. The most common policy, however, was to allow 30 to 40 days' maternity leave and 5 to 10 days' paternity leave.

Some offices had no preset leave limits and handled each request on a case-by-case basis. One executive assistant told us the Senator had not yet received a parental leave request but as he was very concerned

about family issues the office would allow whatever leave an employee needed.

Since January 1987, 50 Senators' offices received and granted 70 requests for maternity leave and 32 requests for paternity leave. Paid maternity leave periods ranged from 10 to 60 days, and paternity leave from 2 to 30 days. Paid maternity or paternity leave accounted for most of the parental leave taken. In most cases, the absent employee's workload was distributed among other employees, although in 12 cases temporary employees were hired.

Agency Parental Leave Policies Follow OPM Guidance

The eight legislative agencies generally follow leave guidance established by OPM. With some variations, the agencies' parental leave policies are as follows:

- Maternity leave: a combination of accrued sick and annual leave and leave without pay.
- Paternity leave: a combination of accrued annual leave and leave without pay.
- Adoption: a combination of accrued annual leave and leave without pay.
- Care for a sick child: a combination of annual leave and leave without pay. In cases of caring for a child with a contagious disease, sick leave may be used.

Sick leave, which is accrued at a rate of 13 days each year, may be carried over to the next year without an upper limit. Annual leave is accrued on the basis of years of service:

- 13 days of leave per year during the first 3 years of service,
- 20 days per year after 3 years of service, and
- 26 days per year after 15 years of service.

Generally, a maximum of 30 days of annual leave can be carried forward to the next year.

Some Child Care Provided but Barriers Encountered

Both the Senate and the House of Representatives have day care centers. Among the legislative agencies, GAO and GPO plan to open centers in 1990. Also, GAO, GPO, and the Library of Congress offer child care referral services to their employees. For more details, see appendixes IV, V, and VI.

Senate Child Care Center

The Senate Child Care Center began operations in 1984. Serving 57 children, the center accepts children from 18 months to 5 years of age and is open to all legislative branch employees. First priority for enrollment belongs to siblings of those currently enrolled. Most of the enrollees are children of Senate employees or Senate support staff.

The center is a nonprofit corporation governed by a voluntary board of directors, which is elected by the members of the corporation. The board is made up of the parents whose children attend the center. Parents are required to give 1-3 hours of volunteer assistance to the center each month. The center's current waiting list has about 100 applicants.

House of Representatives Child Care Center

The House of Representatives Child Care Center began operations in 1987. The center's capacity is 59 children, which is expected to increase to 68 children in 1990. The center accepts children 2-1/2 months to 5 years old and with few exceptions is open only to House of Representatives employees.

A nonprofit corporation, the center is governed by a volunteer board of directors. The board is made up primarily of congressional spouses, House staff, and other support personnel. The center's waiting list is about 150 applicants.

GAO and GPO Centers Expected to Open in 1990

GAO and GPO both plan to open child care centers in March 1990. The organization of the proposed centers will be similar to the Senate and House centers. Both will be operated as separate, nonprofit corporations run by volunteer boards of directors. The home agencies' contributions will be limited to providing space and related services, such as heating, cooling, telephones, security, office machines and equipment, and the like. Federal agencies generally lack explicit authority to use appropriated funds to support child care centers in additional ways.

GAO's proposed child care center will be located in its headquarters building. The planned capacity is 60 to 65 children, including space for 12 infants. Immediate concerns include meeting the District of Columbia's child care center licensing requirements and supporting the center during its first year. The center is expected to have less than full enrollment during the first year, and operating revenue will have to come from tuition, donations, and fund-raising.

As of August 1989, GPO was negotiating to lease space for a 50-child day care center across the street from its headquarters location. The building is currently under construction and, according to GPO's child care task force, could be ready for occupancy by March 1990. GPO also was preparing to enlist a contractor to help the center's future board of directors with final plans for organizing and opening the center.

The task force believes that GPO's child care needs could justify a 24-hour-a-day child care center, and that the results of the current needs assessment will demonstrate a need greater than the 50 child care slots currently proposed.

Barriers in Starting Child Care Centers

Lack of adequate funding and sufficient space are among the major obstacles that legislative branch center directors and agency representatives encountered in establishing and operating centers. In some cases, the inability to obtain top management's support has also been a problem. GPO task force representatives told us that inconsistent management support is one of the primary reasons it has taken 15 years to establish on-site care for its employees.

Another obstacle involves zoning regulations. Library of Congress officials said that its plans to enter into a joint venture with an existing child care center were canceled in January 1988. The center, which was expanded to accommodate 41 children of Library employees, did not obtain the proper rezoning for its larger size. The center closed shortly thereafter.

Recruiting and retaining qualified staff is another barrier to operating a day care center effectively. GAO center representatives are concerned about the numerous centers already in operation in the metropolitan area and the limited supply of qualified, affordable staff. The Senate center director also voiced concern over staff retention and over the center's ability to offer salaries competitive with the other metropolitan area centers. In fact, the House center has delayed expanding its capacity in 1989 because additional staff could not be found.

Both Senate and House directors also wanted to expand their operations, but adequate space and funding were unavailable in the foreseeable future.

Unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report for 30 days. At that time, we will provide copies to each Senator's office, Senate offices, and the legislative branch agencies. We also will make copies available to other interested parties on request.

Other major contributors to this report are listed in appendix VIII.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Franklin Frazier". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "F" and "Frazier".

Franklin Frazier
Director, Income Security Issues
(Disability and Welfare)

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Abbreviations

GAO	General Accounting Office
GPO	Government Printing Office
OPM	Office of Personnel Management

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

We were requested to provide information on the policies and experiences of the Senator's offices, committee chairpersons, other Senate offices, and, with the exception of the House of Representatives, the Legislative Branch agencies regarding parental leave for childbirth, adoption, and the care of a sick child. We were also requested to provide information on the Senate and House child care centers, paying particular attention to the number of children served, the extent of any waiting list, and the obstacles in starting up facilities of this nature.

For our review, we conducted telephone interviews with staff directors of each of the 16 standing Senate committees, and the offices of the Secretary of the Senate and the Senate Sergeant at Arms. We obtained information on parental leave policies and actual experiences during the past 2 years, including the types of parental leave allowed, the number of requests received and granted, the amount of leave taken, and how the workload of the persons on leave was distributed. In June 1989, we sent a questionnaire to each Senator's office requesting similar information. Responses received on or before July 31, 1989, were considered in discussing the Senators' offices policies and experiences.

We interviewed knowledgeable officials in the eight legislative branch agencies to obtain information on their parental leave policies. Additionally, we discussed parental leave policies with officials in the Office of Personnel Management and obtained federal policies in this regard.

In visiting the Senate and the House of Representatives child care centers, we discussed their operations with the center directors. We also talked with officials of the legislative branch agencies about their plans for child care facilities and services. In these discussions we also explored both the obstacles to establishing child care facilities and the problems in keeping them operational.

Other Senate Employers' Parental Leave Policies

Type of leave	Secretary of the Senate	Sergeant at Arms		
		Human Resources Office	Capitol Police	Capitol Hill Guides
Maternity	X	X		X
Paternity				
Annual	X	X	X	X
Sick		X	X	X
Minimal salary		X		X
Leave without pay				
Disability		X		X
Compensatory			X	

Senate Committees' Parental Leave Policies

Employees covered	Maternity	Paternity	Leave to care for sick child	Flexible work schedules
Both majority and minority staff	9	1	4	5
Only majority staff	2	2	3	2
Only minority staff	1	4	0	4
No policy	4	9	9	5
Total committees	16	16	16	16

Legislative Branch Agencies, Employees, and Child Care Services Offered

Legislative agency	Metropolitan Washington employees	Services
House of Representatives: members, staff, support personnel	12,058	Information and referral service, child care center
Senate: members, staff, support personnel	7,239	Information and referral service, child care center
Library of Congress (including Copyright Royalty Tribunal employees)	4,821	Information and referral service
Government Printing Office	4,607	Information and referral service, proposed child care center
General Accounting Office	3,428	Information and referral service, proposed child care center
Architect of the Capitol (including U.S. Botanic Garden employees)	2,224	No formal services offered.
Congressional Budget Office	217	No formal services offered.
Office of Technology Assessment	198	No formal services offered

Legislative Branch Child Care Centers in Operation

	Senate Child Care Center	House of Representatives Child Care Center
Location	190 D St., NE Washington, DC 20510	501 First St., SE Washington, DC 20003
Start-up	Feb. 27, 1984	Sept. 1, 1987
Square feet	4,000	6,000
Capacity	51	59 (68 beginning in 1990)
Enrollment	57 (includes 15 part-time students)	59
Eligibility	1. Siblings of current enrollees. 2. Children of Senate employees. 3. House and other legislative branch employees. 4. Others.	1. Siblings of current enrollees. 2. Children of House employees (includes Architect of Capitol and Capitol Police).
Cost	\$110-130 per week (varies by age). Cost includes snacks and a catered hot lunch.	\$105-130 per week (varies by age). Cost includes 2 snacks daily and diapers for infants.
Financial aid	14 percent of students receive some financial assistance.	20-25 percent of students receive financial aid ranging from \$90 to \$232 monthly.
Philosophy	Developmental/play, with age-appropriate activities.	Developmentally based.
Staff	15 full-time staff.	15 full-time staff and some part-time staff.
Staff education	Teachers have BA or BS in child development or early childhood education. Assistant teachers and aides must have formal training in child care related fields.	Teachers have BA or MA in early childhood education. Assistant teachers and aides must have formal training in child care related fields.
Staff/child ratio	Varies with age, averages 1 to 4 for younger children and 1 to 8 for older children.	Varies with age, averages 1 to 4.
Waiting list	Varies from 100 to 150.	About 150.
Average time on list	2 to 3 years.	Varies.
Need for services	Need is greater than the waiting list indicates, mostly for children 3 and younger.	Need is greater than waiting list indicates. There is a large demand for all ages; the younger the child the greater the demand.
Expansion	No present plans.	No present plans.
Ages accepted	18 months to 5 years. The Center offers a 10-week summer program for 5- to 8-year-old children.	2-1/2 months to 5 years.
Hours	7.30 a.m. to 6.45 p.m.	8 a.m. to 6.30 p.m.
Holidays, snow days, etc.	Closed federal holidays, 1 week at Christmas and for 4 staff training days; follows DC school weather schedule.	Follows House calendar for holidays, follows DC school weather schedule, closed 1 week in late August and at Christmas.

(continued)

Appendix V
Legislative Branch Child Care Centers
in Operation

	Senate Child Care Center	House of Representatives Child Care Center
Owners	Senate Employees' Child Care Center, Inc., an independent nonprofit corporation.	House of Representatives Child Care Center, Inc., an independent nonprofit corporation.
Board of directors	Voluntary, parent controlled	Voluntary, primarily congressional wives and House staff, with parent representation
Funding	Space and janitorial services provided free of charge (phone not included), \$20,000 start-up fund provided by Senate; tuition and donations must cover operating costs.	Donated space and utilities (except telephone), and ordinary maintenance; \$100,000 interest-free loan provided for start-up costs (first payment due 8/91); tuition and donations must cover operating costs.
Enabling legislation	Senate Resolution 321, 1979.	House Resolution 21, 1985.

Proposed Legislative Branch Child Care Centers

	General Accounting Office (Proposed, March 1990)	Government Printing Office (Proposed, March 1990)
Location	441 G St., NW Washington, DC 20548	777 North Capitol St., Washington, DC 20401
Start-up	March 1990	March 1990
Capacity	60-65, including 12 infants	50 children
Licensing	District of Columbia	District of Columbia
Eligibility	Children of: 1. GAO employees. 2. Federal employees. 3. GAO contractors. 4. Others.	Children of: 1. GPO employees. 2. Federal employees. 3. Others.
Owners	Tiny Findings, Inc., an independent nonprofit corporation.	Independent nonprofit corporation.
Board of directors	Voluntary, parent controlled.	Voluntary, parent controlled.
Funding	Agency donated space and services. Other operating costs to be met by tuition and donations.	Agency-donated space and services. Other operating costs to be met by tuition and donations.
Financial aid	Center will provide financial aid to the extent that funding permits.	Proposed sliding scale for aid to the extent that funding permits.

GAO Questionnaire Survey of Senate Offices

GAO

United States General Accounting Office

Survey of Senate Offices

Parental Leave for Childbirth, Adoption, or Care of a Sick Child

Official Government Business

Appendix VII
GAO Questionnaire Survey of Senate Offices

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GAO Survey of Senate Offices:
Parental Leave for Childbirth, Adoption, or Care of a Sick Child

INTRODUCTION

The General Accounting Office has been asked by Senator Harry Reid, Chairman, Legislative Branch Subcommittee, Committee on Appropriations to describe office practices regarding leave Senate staff members take for the birth or adoption of a child, or for care of a seriously ill child. To fulfill this request we are conducting a survey of Senators' personal offices to determine how many requests for such leave have occurred among Senate staff since January 1, 1987, and the type of leave and length of time taken.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please have the person in your office who is most familiar with staff members' requests for leave associated with childbirth, adoption, or care of a seriously ill child complete and return this questionnaire. Please return it within one week of receipt to the:

U.S. General Accounting Office
441 G Street, NW
Room 6725
Washington, DC 20548
Attn: Frank Guido

It should take about 20 minutes to complete. A preaddressed, postage-paid business reply envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential. We will only report them in aggregate with those of other Senate offices. No one outside GAO will have access to your individual responses.

If you have any questions about this questionnaire or about the study, please call Frank Guido at 275-1047.

Please provide the following information about the person we should contact if additional information is required.

Name: _____
Title: _____
Telephone Number: _____

SECTION I: Office Experiences

1. How many people are currently employed on your Washington D.C. personal office staff? (ENTER NUMBER FOR EACH. IF NONE, ENTER 0)

	Male	Female
Total staff	_____	_____

2. Since January 1, 1987 has any staff member in your Washington D.C. personal office requested leave associated with the birth or adoption of a child?

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No (SKIP TO QUESTION 6.)

3. Enter the number of requests for leave for birth or adoption that occurred since January 1, 1987 and the number of these requests for which any amount or type of leave was granted.

Number of Requests _____

Number Granted _____

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4. For each request that has been granted since January 1, 1987, provide the information listed below. If more than four staff members were granted leave, xerox this page and provide information for these staff members as well.

	Case One	Case Two	Case Three	Case Four
What was gender of the staff member?	(CHECK ONE.) 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Male 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Female	(CHECK ONE.) 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Male 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Female	(CHECK ONE.) 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Male 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Female	(CHECK ONE.) 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Male 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Was leave for birth or adoption?	(CHECK ONE.) 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Birth 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Adoption	(CHECK ONE.) 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Birth 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Adoption	(CHECK ONE.) 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Birth 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Adoption	(CHECK ONE.) 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Birth 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Adoption
In what year did leave begin?	198__	198__	198__	198__
How many days of leave were granted with partial pay, reduced pay or minimal salary?	____ days	____ days	____ days	____ days
In total, how many days of leave were granted with <u>full</u> pay? (If none, enter 0.)	____ days	____ days	____ days	____ days
Of the leave with full pay, how many days were considered sick leave?	____ days	____ days	____ days	____ days
Of the leave with full pay, how many days were considered vacation or annual leave?	____ days	____ days	____ days	____ days
Of the leave with full pay, how many days were considered administrative leave?	____ days	____ days	____ days	____ days
Of the leave with full pay, how many days were considered maternity/paternity leave or leave <u>exclusively</u> for birth/adoption? (Do <u>not</u> include sick, vacation or administrative leave.)	____ days	____ days	____ days	____ days
For how many of these days was a temporary employee hired? (If none, enter 0.)	____ days	____ days	____ days	____ days

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5. We would like to know how your office handles a staff member's workload while he/she is on leave for birth or adoption.

For each case described in question 4, indicate whether or not the staff members's workload was ever handled in each of the ways listed below (CHECK ONE FOR EACH).

	Yes	No
Interns or volunteer workers handled the work		
Work was assigned to one other staff member		
Work was assigned to 2 or more staff members		
Staff temporarily assigned from other agencies handled work		
Temporary employee was hired		
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY.)		

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Section II: Standard Operating Practices

6. For each type of leave listed below we would like to know the following information.

Part A: Is it your office's standard operating practice (written or unwritten) to not grant this leave, grant it only under certain circumstances, or grant it always or almost always for the birth or adoption of a child.

Part B: If the type of leave would be granted under certain circumstances or granted always or almost always, indicate whether or not there is a specified maximum number of days that may be granted.

Part C: If there is a specified maximum number of days, enter that number in part C.

	PART A			PART B		PART C
	Your office would: (CHECK ONE.)			Is there a maximum num- ber of days? (CHECK ONE.)		Enter the maximum number of days
	NOT GRANT (1)	UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUM- STANCES (2)	ALWAYS OR ALMOST ALWAYS (3)	Yes (1)	No (2)	
Leave with partial pay or minimal salary						
for Birth Mother						If yes--> _____
for Birth Father						If yes--> _____
for Adoption Mother						If yes--> _____
for Adoption Father						If yes--> _____
Sick leave						
for Birth Mother						If yes--> _____
for Birth Father						If yes--> _____
for Adoption Mother						If yes--> _____
for Adoption Father						If yes--> _____
Vacation time or annual leave						
for Birth Mother						If yes--> _____
for Birth Father						If yes--> _____
for Adoption Mother						If yes--> _____
for Adoption Father						If yes--> _____
Administrative leave						
for Birth Mother						If yes--> _____
for Birth Father						If yes--> _____
for Adoption Mother						If yes--> _____
for Adoption Father						If yes--> _____
Special maternity/paternity leave or leave with full pay exclusively for birth/adoption. (Do <u>not</u> include sick, annual, or administrative leave.)						
for Birth Mother						If yes--> _____
for Birth Father						If yes--> _____
for Adoption Mother						If yes--> _____
for Adoption Father						If yes--> _____

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Section III. Leave to Care for a Child who is Seriously Ill

7. Is it your office's standard operating practice (written or unwritten) to allow staff members to use their sick leave to care for a child who is seriously ill?

(By "seriously ill" we mean an illness, injury, or condition which involves inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential health care facility, or continuing treatment or continuing supervision by a health care provider.)

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No
3. ☐ Does not apply. Office does not grant sick leave.

8. Is it your office's standard operating practice to allow staff members to use their vacation time or annual leave to care for a sick child?

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No
3. ☐ Does not apply. Office does not grant vacation time or annual leave.

9. Is it your office's standard operating practice to allow staff members to use administrative leave to care for a child who is seriously ill?

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No
3. ☐ Does not apply. Office does not grant administrative leave.

10. Is it your office's standard operating practice to grant a special type of leave (excluding sick, vacation or administrative leave) to parents to care for a child who is seriously ill?

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No (Skip to Question 16).

11. Is there a specified maximum number of days of this type of leave your office would grant to an individual staff person?

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No (Skip to Question 16).

12. What is the maximum number of days of this type of leave that may be granted to an individual staff person per year?

_____ days per year

13. Since January 1, 1988, did your office grant any leave of this type of leave to parents to care for a seriously ill child?

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No (Skip to Question 16).

14. In total, since January 1, 1988 how many days of this type of leave were granted to all staff members in your office?

_____ days

15. Please list the types of illnesses for which this type of leave was granted.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

(CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE) ---->

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16. If you have any additional comments about your office's practices or experiences regarding leave for birth, adoption, or care of a seriously ill child, please write them in the space below.

Major Contributors to This Report

Human Resources Division, Washington, D.C.

Franklin Frazier, Director, Income Security Issues (Disability and Welfare), (202) 275-1793
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