

THE DEMOCRATIC ADVISORY COUNCIL
1028 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Suite 1108
Washington 6, D.C.

This statement was adopted by the Democratic Advisory Council at its meeting in Washington, D.C. on Sunday, June 14, 1959.

THE CURRENT LEGISLATIVE SITUATION

Last November the American people gave an unmistakable mandate at the polls for a progressive legislative program by increasing the Democratic majorities in both Houses of Congress. In 1960 the voters will have an opportunity to solidify this mandate by electing a Democratic President and, thus, to eliminate the present working-at-cross-purposes of the legislative and executive branches of the government. A review of the present unsatisfactory legislative situation resulting from this working-at-cross-purposes shows the difficulty of achieving, and at the same time emphasizes the necessity for, a constructive program such as is outlined in this statement.

Until there is a Democratic President in the White House, we face the retarding and corrosive effects of "veto government." The Congress has been continuously threatened with Presidential vetoes in the attempt to thwart one constructive and necessary measure after another. Time-consuming efforts have been made to water-down proposed legislation to the limits of what the President might accept, or to what might win the support of the two-thirds majority in each House necessary to override a Presidential veto. The actual exercise of the Presidential veto is not the only way in which it can be used to retard or block constructive legislation.

The Republican President gave early notice of his intention to frustrate the will of the people as expressed in the November 1958 election.

In a press conference the day after the election, he said that he was opposed to the decisions made by the voters and that he intended to fight them. Since then he and his lieutenants have consistently sought to rally Congressional Republicans and dissident Democrats to oppose the efforts of the Democratic majority to enact progressive legislation.

Much of the Republican obstructionism has been obscured by parliamentary complexities, but on occasion their opposition has been forced into the open where it is plain for all to see.

A major housing bill has passed both Houses of Congress over the strong opposition of the Republican Party and is now in Conference. It will soon be sent to the President. 47 Democratic Senators supported this bill but only 13 Republicans voted for it. The Democrats in the Senate voted almost 5 to 1 in favor of the bill. The Republicans voted about 3 to 2 against it. Much the same story was true in the House of Representatives. The Democrats voted 5 to 1 for the bill, the Republicans over 3 to 1 against it.

When a meaningful Federal airport construction program was approved in the Senate, 51 Democrats voted for the bill but only 12 Republican Senators joined them. In the House, the Democrats voted almost 10 to 1 in favor of a bill, the Republicans over 3 to 1 against.

There are other examples of Republican obstructionism.

Constructive legislation to alleviate the plight of the millions of Americans in the distressed areas has passed the Senate only to face the threat of Presidential veto. Democratic Senators voted almost 3 to 1 in favor of the bill, the Republican Senators voted over 7 to 1 against it. This legislation is similar to that vetoed by the President after the previous Congress adjourned.

The pattern is clear and continuing: Most Democrats support progressive legislation; most Republicans oppose it.

Despite this situation, the Republican floor leaders in the Senate and House, fresh from a conference with the President every Tuesday morning, use the steps of the White House as a platform to criticize by radio and television the Democratic Party and the Democratic Congress for the very delays and disappointments for which the Republicans are responsible.

This Republican obstructionism makes the Democratic task doubly hard.

However, the people expect and are entitled to have in this Congress more tangible results of the mandate they gave a Democratic majority last November than they have received to date. There is widespread hope and desire in the country for more positive progress in this Congress. We urge the Democratic majority to use its power and give the nation a significant program of constructive legislation regardless of Republican opposition.

We offer our views as to some of the more important goals to which the efforts of all Democrats in Congress should be concentrated:

1. Mutual Security. Action should be completed on an adequate and well-balanced mutual security program. The Eisenhower-Nixon Administration lacked the courage to recommend what it knew was necessary for economic assistance under this program, especially for the Development Loan Fund. The actions of the House and Senate Committees considering this program indicate the likelihood that the Congress will save the Administration from its own folly. We fully support the action of the Senate Committee in providing a continuing authority of \$1 billion a year for five years for the Development Loan Fund.

2. Military Forces. The Congress must provide the leadership that is lacking in the Administration to provide the military forces we need for the nation's safety in the nuclear age. The views of the Advisory Council on this subject are set out at length in a pamphlet "The Military Forces We Need and How To Get Them" to be issued this week. We earnestly hope that in considering authorizations and appropriations for our Armed Forces, the Congress will not be misled into short-changing the nation's safety by false notions of what we can afford.

3. Education. A bold and imaginative program for Federal aid to education is desperately needed. Only last month, the President's own Science Advisory Committee, after a careful study, recommended that the nation's current annual investment in education be at least doubled. Our President responded, incredibly, but characteristically by saying that he hoped the report "will be widely read." It is apparent that the youth of America are going to have to look elsewhere for educational sustenance, and their hope is the Democratic majority in Congress.

4. Housing and Urban Renewal. Both Houses of Congress have passed a good housing and urban renewal bill over Republican opposition. It is now in Conference. We commend the Democratic majority for this most significant achievement, and we hope that the bill will soon be presented to the President unimpaired.

5. Depressed Areas. The Senate has passed and a House Committee has reported a bill to establish a substantial program of technical and financial assistance for areas of chronic unemployment. This is the same kind of bill President Eisenhower vetoed last year after the adjournment of Congress. He and his Administration have sought to block it again this year. We hope their opposition will not prevail. The bill is needed now worse than ever. The plight of the depressed areas is getting worse, not better. If the Republicans insist on perpetuating these pockets of misery and unemployment, the responsibility should be clearly theirs.

6. Agriculture. For six long years Secretary of Agriculture Benson has stubbornly refused to recommend an adequate farm program and has frustrated all efforts by anyone else to enact one. From time to time, the Congress has shored up the existing program over Secretary Benson's opposition, but he has always managed to administer it so as to reduce the benefits to farmers and increase fantastically the cost to taxpayers. A major recasting of the farm program is now required. It is evident that in the face of Secretary Benson's opposition the required new program cannot be enacted this year -- and perhaps not while he remains as Secretary of Agriculture. But this is a matter of great urgency and importance. We believe it is possible to have a farm program which will cost far less than the present programs and at the same time benefit farmers far more. Our views on how this can be done were set out in a pamphlet issued last month -- "The Democratic Approach To The Farm Problem."

7. Civil Rights. Questions of civil rights continue to grip the thoughts and emotions of the American people as have few issues in our time. It is crucial to the preservation of our democracy and to maintaining our position before the world that these problems be solved so as to secure to all our citizens the full enjoyment of their human rights. The course of events brings forth new problems in this field which require new legislation. Legislation needed now includes provisions for assistance to the States in the transition to desegregated schools and provisions to strengthen the Federal protection of Civil Rights generally.

8. Social Legislation. We are prone to take for granted now the social revolution embodied in the New Deal and the Fair Deal. But these programs that have done so much to eliminate poverty and distress in America need continually to be kept up to date and strengthened. Even now some of them, because of rising price levels, afford less protection than in years gone by. Early action is required to establish Federal standards for unemployment insurance, to increase the minimum wage and expand its coverage, and to expand the Social Security insurance program.

9. Labor Unions. There has been a clear demonstration of the need for legislation to aid the honest trade union movement in the elimination of corruption from labor-management affairs. We hope this Congress will be able to complete action on such legislation, without punitive provisions and without requirements that would needlessly burden unions in the conduct of their legitimate affairs.

10. Tax Revision. Our tax laws need revision to increase revenue by plugging existing loopholes, to distribute the tax burden more equitably on the basis of ability to pay, and to promote the growth of our economy. We welcome the Ways and Means Committee's announced plans for hearings looking toward a broad revision of the tax laws, and we trust that this will lead to the enactment of legislation for these purposes.

11. Fiscal and Monetary Policy. Many millions of Americans are feeling the bitter fruits of the Republican tight-money policy in higher interest rates, increased living costs, lower purchasing power and, worst of all, in unemployment. Nevertheless, the advocates of tight money and high interest rates lose no opportunity to compound past damage by further excess.

Republican economic policy is now a demonstrated failure. In the last five and one-half years we have had the highest unemployment since the Great Depression, the most severe peacetime inflation in our history and a slow and wholly inadequate rate of economic growth. The Administration has sought to balance the budget by reducing needed expenditures. It has succeeded in reducing Federal revenues by preventing healthy economic expansion and growth. As a result, in four of its six budgets the Eisenhower-Nixon Administration has had huge deficits -- a record which squares badly with its constant preachments on fiscal responsibility and sound finance.

The Congress should resist and where possible reverse the Administration's tight money policy. The current proposal to increase interest rates on Federal bonds, a step made necessary by speculation based on high corporate profits, is indefensible. It will have a damaging effect on small borrowers, States, municipalities and homeowners. It will further limit economic growth and further restrict the expansion of Federal revenues and the reduction of the deficit. And it will not deal in an effective way with the continuing problem of inflation. We strongly support the forthcoming Congressional re-examination of Administration fiscal and monetary policy and hope it leads to a thoroughgoing reversal of policies which are at worst damaging and at best futile.

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It is our considered judgment that the interests of the nation and the people would be best served by passing the legislation the Democratic majority knows the country needs, and by putting it in the President's hands to sign or veto. We believe that this will have two beneficial results. First, more good legislation will be enacted than would otherwise be the case. Secondly, when and if bills actually are vetoed, the differences between the Democratic and Republican Parties would be even more sharply brought into focus so that the voters will understand them clearly in the election of 1960.

We cannot have the kind of government and the legislation the country needs and wants with the Executive Branch of the Government in the hands of the Republican Party. Only through strong Congressional majorities with a Democratic President can the United States hope to realize its great potential in the mid-twentieth Century.

But events and human needs will not stand still to await January 1961. We Democrats must fight for our program every day, and achieve as much constructive legislation as is possible.

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NOTE: Mrs. Benjamin Bryan Everett, Democratic National Committeewoman of North Carolina, dissented from numbered paragraph 7 on page 2 entitled "Civil Rights."

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