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Statement by Senator Edmund S. Muskie on Nixon's Veto of the Accelerated Public Works Program

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MUSKIE

IMMEDIATELY

Maine

(202) 225-5344

June 29, 1971

FOR RELEASE

MUSKIE STATEMENT ON NIXON VETO OF THE ACCELERATED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAM

"President Nixon's veto of the Accelerated Public Works Program is ill-advised and ill-timed. Obviously, the Accelerated Public Works Act is not a panacea for all our economic woes, but it is a reasoned and needed response to our presently deteriorating economy. Unemployment is at the intolerable level of 6.2% and likely to increase. The American economy is now operating at \$60 billion below its full potential. Clearly, additional measures are needed to create jobs.

"The Accelerated Public Works Program has the dual purpose of increasing employment in areas of greatest need and providing communities with basic and long neglected facilities, such as water and sewage works, hospital and road improvement, public buildings, and the like. It meets the needs of local citizens and, at the same time, paves the way for the future expansion of the economy. It will create about 170,000 or more badly needed jobs within the year. The overall impact of this title could increase employment by as much as 420,000 jobs.

"These jobs will not be make-work or leaf-raking jobs. They are jobs that need to be done. For example, there is a backlog of applications involving nearly \$6 billion in federal funds from communities to help build over 6,000 waste treatment plants, water and sewage facilities, hospitals, nursing homes, and public health centers. In addition, there is a backlog of \$3 billion in federal projects ready for construction. These projects represent decisions of national and local officials of what is needed for local development.

"I am glad that President Nixon now speaks with approval of the public service employment legislation which he vetoed last year. Both accelerated public works and public service employment are Congressionally-initiated and Congressionally-enacted programs to create jobs. These programs are not in conflict and, in fact, supplement each other. There are many different kinds of jobs that need to be done, just as there are many different kinds of workers unemployed. No one program is going to be an adequate response to the present intolerable unemployment problem.

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"These vetoed programs stand in stark contrast with the President's depreciation changes. They would create tens of thousands of new jobs within the year. On the other hand, the President's proposal will cost almost \$40 billion in the first decade of its operation and while it may create some jobs in the future, it is essentially a costly tax cut for certain big businesses.

"The President's depreciation proposals were implemented without Congress having any meaningful role in the determining of this major economic policy. Furthermore, implementation of this policy exhausted funds needed for Congressionally enacted bills, like the Accelerated Public Works Act. It is ironic for a President to undertake policy costing billions of dollars without asking Congress and then veto Congressionally-enacted, job-creating bills because of a lack of funds.

"The President's veto will have a particularly unfortunate impact on Maine, where 32,100 persons were unemployed last month. All but three of Maine's sixteen counties have an unemployment rate in excess of 8%. Sixteen per cent of Washington County's labor force is unemployed, as is 10.4% of Androscoggin County.

In Maine, as elsewhere, there are a great number of planned local public works projects which could provide immediate jobs to hundreds of people. However, they cannot proceed until adequate funding, such as that provided in the vetoed bill, is made available.

"In 1962, the Congress enacted a similar program which provided for the construction of an addition to St. Mary's Hospital in Lewiston, a library in Caribou, and many other projects. The situation in 1971 is similar to the conditions of 1962. However, this year, there is no program to help Maine and other states."

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"I am glad that the President has approved the bill which provides for the construction of public works projects in Maine and other states. These projects will create jobs and help the economy. The bill also provides for the construction of a new hospital in Lewiston, a library in Caribou, and many other projects. The situation in 1971 is similar to the conditions of 1962. However, this year, there is no program to help Maine and other states."