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## Statement of Senator Edmund S. Muskie on the Texas Drought

Edmund S. Muskie

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# MUSKIE News

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Thursday, July 1, 1971**

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## MUSKIE COMMENTS ON TEXAS DROUGHT

### DALLAS, TEXAS

Before the questions begin, I want to say a few words about my feelings on the drought which is causing so much hardship to so many people in Texas and Oklahoma.

Farmers here are seeing their harvest literally wiped out. Ranchers are watching their cattle starve and have been forced to sell even their essential breeding stock. Rural householders desperately need water for their homes and livestock but cannot find assistance to drill a new well. Local merchants cannot sell their goods and have difficulty in obtaining assistance from hard-pressed banks. Young children cannot attend school because they are stricken with respiratory infections caused by the drought. And people who have lived all their lives on the land now face being driven from the very land they have tried to make fruitful for all of us.

I believe that this is a disaster, not only for Hardeman County, Texas or Lawton, Oklahoma, but a disaster for the entire nation. I believe the time has come for the President of the United States to declare these areas a major disaster zone.

We can no longer afford to minimize the full human dimensions of this crisis. Farmers need more help and more than farmers need help. The drought is destroying the economy of whole towns in the disaster area. It is no longer simply a problem for the Agriculture Department. It is time for the President to take charge.

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being driven from the very land they have tried to make fruitful

A presidential declaration could initiate a comprehensive economic program aiding small businessmen and farmers, householders and ranchers alike. But that declaration has not been made.

Presidential action could make certain that no citizen of Texas had to take a pauper's oath before receiving drought assistance. But that action has not been taken.

Proper presidential priorities could lead to federal grants, rather than loans, for the kind of local water systems that could alleviate the crisis of drought. But those priorities are still wrong.

Today a representative of the Department of Agriculture arrives in Amarillo to determine whether the drought relief program should be expanded. It is my hope that his first recommendation on his return to Washington will be that the plea for major disaster area assistance that has been heard throughout this state for over three months -- from the Vernon Chamber of Commerce to Governor Smith's office -- will now be heeded at the White House.

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