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Floor Statement on Compromise Drug Bill

Edmund S. Muskie

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Muskie, Edmund S., "Floor Statement on Compromise Drug Bill" (1971). *Speeches*. 193.
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FLOOR STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE

Wednesday, November 17, 1971

MR. MUSKIE: Mr. President, the compromise drug bill reported to the Senate by the Committee on Government Operations represents a significant breakthrough in our National effort to combat drug abuse.

This legislation is a bipartisan effort involving the Administration and Senators of both parties.

Mr. President, I must especially commend the ^{outstanding} work of the Senior Senator from Connecticut (Mr. Ribicoff) whose Subcommittee on Executive Reorganization and Government Research considered this bill jointly with my own Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations. Senator Ribicoff's efforts were instrumental to the development of this compromise bill.

I would also like to commend the efforts of Senator Percy, the sponsor of the Administration bill, Senator Javits, and Senator Gurney for their ^{effective} ~~monumental~~ work toward reaching this compromise. And, in particular, I would like to cite Senator Hughes, who has long provided leadership in the Senate in this important area, for his efforts in helping to draft this important legislation.

I believe this bill is significant in several respects.

First, it calls for the development of a comprehensive, coordinated long-term Federal strategy to combat drug abuse, providing, for the first time, a mechanism to develop a unified Federal policy against drug abuse, focusing all of our resources, including law enforcement, treatment, education and research.

Second, the bill creates a Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention in the Executive Office of the President to pull together heretofore scattered Federal anti-drug programs. The Special Action Office will be broad in scope, responsible for determining the Federal policy toward treatment, education and research programs, for recommending and consulting on law enforcement policy and for coordinating all Federal drug programs.

Third, it requires that the Veterans Administration provide treatment and rehabilitation services for any former servicemen suffering from drug addiction, no matter the status of their discharge and it requires the Civil Service Commission to develop treatment and rehabilitation programs for drug addicts employed by the Federal Government.

All of these provisions were part of legislation introduced earlier this year by Senator Hughes and myself with Senators Javits and Williams.

Other significant provisions in that earlier bill will now be considered in the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. Those provisions include the establishment of a National Institute on Drug Abuse within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the authorization of funds for a major national commitment to treat drug addicts.

Those items are the proper concern of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. It is my anticipation that they will be added in that Committee so the bill the Senate finally considers will be comprehensive legislation that will make a significant impact on the serious drug problem.

Mr. President, this proves once again that outstanding legislation in the public interest is the result of a genuinely bipartisan effort. It is most significant that Senators on both sides of the political aisle have put partisan considerations aside in drafting this legislation to deal with one of the most serious problems facing our Nation today.