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9-30-1970

Press Release - Muskie Urges Action on President's Welfare Bill

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For Release
6 P.M.
SEPTEMBER 30, 1970

MUSKIE URGES ACTION ON PRESIDENT'S WELFARE BILL

Hampden, Maine--Senator Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) today urged prompt consideration of President Nixon's family assistance plan "because reform of our welfare system must be one of our highest national priorities."

Speaking before the Hampden Jaycees in Hampden, Maine, the Senator said that not only must the lives of those living in poverty be improved, so also must the country "relieve State governments of the severe financial burdens which the present welfare system places upon them.

"That is why I have supported the Nixon Administration's initiative in offering a major welfare reform proposal."

In his prepared remarks, Senator Muskie said that the bill which the Senate should be considering would provide "a minimum level of Federal support for all needy families with children, including the working poor. It would provide a basic income for the aged, blind and disabled of \$110 a month. It would provide an incentive for present welfare recipients to work by making them better off financially if they earn money than if they depend completely on welfare assistance. And it would provide an increase in job training opportunities and the establishment of day care centers.

"For Maine this would mean--additional Federal assistance of some \$14 million, support for 90,000 of Maine's working poor who presently receive no Federal assistance at all, and a savings to the state of \$3.2 million if present levels of welfare assistance remain the same."

Senator Muskie called the present welfare system undignified, inadequate and unsound. "Heads of families are discouraged from seeking jobs and many wives and children are better off financially if their husbands and fathers leave them."

Senator Muskie warned that "welfare reform would not be a substitute for the State's responsibility to provide social services for the poor. But it could help state government eventually use more of its revenues to provide better services for all its citizens."

More than a month ago, Mr. Muskie made a statement on the U.S. Senate floor urging passage of a welfare reform bill, calling it "the first major step toward welfare realism in years."