

Jeremy Ben-Ami

Jeremy Ben-Ami is the Deputy Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy. In this capacity, he is responsible for coordinating and monitoring key elements of the President's domestic agenda.

Prior to this, he was Chief of Staff of the White House Domestic Policy Council, coordinating the DPC's work with other agencies and White House offices, in addition to his own work on welfare reform and other social service issues. Prior to joining the DPC, he was Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families at the Department of Health and Human Services, helping to coordinate the Working Group on Welfare Reform, Family Support and Independence. The Working Group was appointed by the President to develop a plan to implement his pledge to "end welfare as we know it."

Ben-Ami worked on President Bill Clinton's campaign and transition on the domestic policy staff and did advance work for the campaign. In those positions, he was responsible for helping to formulate and plan events and materials related to the campaign's domestic agenda.

Previously, Ben-Ami was Assistant Deputy Commissioner of the New York City Human Resources Administration. He was responsible for the City's programs for developing supported housing programs for homeless families and individuals. He also helped coordinate the development of the City's five year plan for housing and serving the homeless.

Previous work in New York City government included serving as an Assistant Director of the City's Office of Operations and positions in the City's Office on Homelessness and Office of Management and Budget.

Ben-Ami holds a law degree from New York University, where he was a Root Tilden Public Interest Scholar and a BA from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University.

Archive: Jeremy Ben-Ami

Box #1

Names of Files

- * Make Work Pay
- * Legislative Outreach
- * Legislative: Letters/Statements/Reports
- * Outreach: Groups
- * Outreach: Labor Unions
- * Polling
- * Republican Plan
- * Rollout
- * Specs Issues
- * State Waiver- Option Memo (Welfare)
- * Substance Abuse
- * Talking Points/Info for Presentations
- * Other Comments
- * Welfare: JBA + PO drafts
- * Working Group: 1993 Handouts
- * Working Group: Announcement
- * Working Papers
- * Work Specs

Archive: Jeremy Ben-Ami

Box #3

(#4) ↓ Stairs

Names of Files

- * Event: School to Work- May 17
- * Event: Teen Preg. 6/12/96
- * Youth Drug Conference: Current for 12:00 Briefing
- * Family Executive Order
- * Family Friendly Work
- * Family Planning
- * Family Reunion VI
- * Farm Workers
- * Fatherhood
- * FDR
- * Finance Project
- * Gambling
- * Gay Marriage
- * Head Start
- * Health Care
- * Hispanic Ed. Commission
- * Homeless
- * Housing Policy
- * Human Serve
- * Immigration (file 1)
- * Immigration (file 2)
- * Immunization
- * Labor Issues
- * Low Income Programs: Policy Review
- * MEDIA Violence
- * Medicaid
- * Montana Town Hall
- * MADO
- * National Service: Info
- * Native American Issues
- * Oregon Benchmarks
- * Prevention Council
- * Reinventing Government

Archive: Jeremy Ben-Ami

Box #5

Names of Files

- * Working Session- Blair House- Jan 28, 1995
- * Mainstream Bill- 1995
- * Welfare: Current
- * Welfare Reform- 1995
- * Working Group: Broad Proposals
- * Business Outreach
- * Welfare Reform- 1994 CBO Estimate
- * Charles Murray
- * Child Care
- * Child Support Info
- * Communications- Old Info (HHS)
- * Talking Points
- * Coordination: Training Programs
- * EITC
- * Economic Development
- * Education and Training
- * Emergency Assistance
- * Welfare: Arkansas History
- * Improving Government Assistance
- * Outreach: Intergovernmental
- * Kansas City
- * Legislation

Archive: Jeremy Ben-Ami

Box #2

Names of Files

- * AIDS: Ryan White
- * AIDS: Needle Exchange
- * AIDS: National Strategy
- * AIDS: DOD Authorization
- * AIDS Issues
- * AIDS Conference
- * Advertising Council
- * Adoption
- * Adoption/Foster Care
- * Affirmative Action
- * Aging Policy Issues
- * Assisted Suicide,
- * Back to School
- * Common Ground
- * DELTA Project
- * Childhood Disability Commission
- * IDEA Reauthorization
- * NDPR- 1995
- * NDPR: Start-up
- * Dredging (file 1)
- * Dredging (file 2)
- * Education Issues
- * Education Budget:1995 -Materials-
- * Emerging Diseases
- * Empowerment Zones
- * English Only
- * ETR
- * Events: ASNE + NEA April 7 + 8, 1995
- * Carbondale
- * Charlotte
- * Event: Family Reunion 6/24/96
- * Event: Iowa Trip 2/10/96
- * Pueblo- 9/20
- * 9/22/95 San Diego Charter Schools

NNC Information Report

Newsletter of the National Neighborhood Coalition

November/December 1995

Presidential Advisor Addresses NNC Information Forum

Jeremy Ben-Ami, Deputy Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, discussed the Administration's legislative priorities at the NNC Information Forum held November 9 at the National Council of La Raza in Washington, DC.

The Forum, chaired by NNC Co-Chair Tom Kenyon of the National Alliance to End Homelessness, drew 60 neighborhood practitioners and advocates from the Washington, DC area, and from as far away as California.

During his introduction of Jeremy Ben-Ami, Mr. Kenyon noted Ben-Ami's previous work as Chief of Staff of the White House Domestic Policy Council, and as Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families at the Department of Health and Human Services. In addition, Ben-Ami was the Assistant Deputy Commissioner of the Human Resources Administration of New York City where he developed supportive housing programs for the homeless.



Jeremy Ben-Ami of the White House

BALANCED BUDGET, BUDGET RECONCILIATION, & CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Ben-Ami began his presentation by addressing the pressing issue of the federal budget. He reminded everyone that on November 13 the continuing resolution – a stop-gap measure funding the government – runs out, and that separately, the United States government will hit its debt limit soon after. The crisis, however, is about more than just the budget. "The Republican

Next Information Forum

NNC's Annual Meeting
will be held

Wednesday, December 6, from noon until 2:00

Location TBA

Keynote Speaker: William E. Curry
Counselor to the President

Call Karen Alexander
at 202-986-2096 for more information.

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Congress," Ben-Ami said, "is intent on using this as the opportunity to really bring to a head the crisis that has been looming over our heads."

Ben-Ami was adamant in stating that President Clinton will not back down from his stand against the budget bills before him. "The President will not be blackmailed by the Congress into signing a continuing resolution or a debt limit along the lines that they have proposed...He will continue to stand firm on his principles, ...and [the President] will only accept a balanced budget that reflects a basic set of values."

Ben-Ami went on to explain that an acceptable budget has to:

- 1) Continue to invest in education and training.

"[This] is the most important investment in making sure that families can continue to make it in the new economy and into the twenty-first century."

- 2) Honor the federal government's commitment to the elderly in both health and economic security.

"Proposed levels of cuts in Medicare and Medicaid are simply unacceptable. Any budget presented to us with that level of cuts will be vetoed."

- 3) Address issues relating to the environment and public health.
- 4) Address issues of tax cuts targeted to the well-off and cuts in the Earned Income Tax Credit for the working poor.

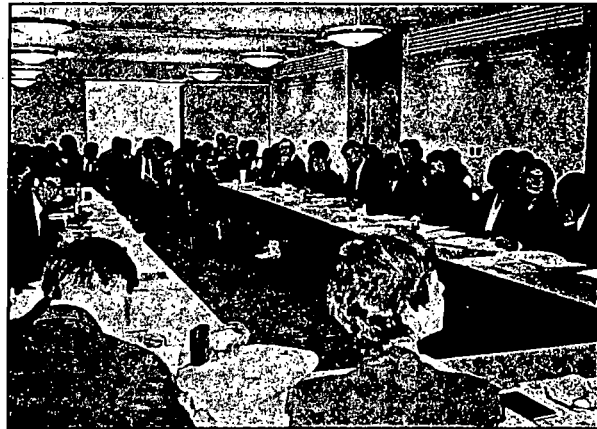
"The budget has to help working families; has to be targeted at providing relief to low- and middle-income families, and not targeted to helping the wealthy."

- 5) Balance the budget.

"President Clinton has put forward a balanced budget plan. It is a plan that reflects those values and still gets to balance in 10 years. We stand ready to work with the Congress to find a way to balance the budget in a reasonable period of time, [and] that does meet those essential values."

HUD APPROPRIATIONS

Noting the high level of housing interest among Forum attendees, Ben-Ami stressed that the HUD Appropriations Bill for FY 1996 proposed by Congress is unacceptable to the President. He assured the group that if the bill is presented to President Clinton as it stands, it will be vetoed.



Attendees at the November 9 NNC Information Forum

Ben-Ami noted that there is a series of reasons to veto the bill including national service elimination, environmental riders, and the housing cuts.

Ben-Ami then went on to note the Administration's priorities for the Department of Housing and Urban Development. In general, the Administration favors the Senate-passed Appropriations bill that provides higher overall funding for HUD (\$20.5 billion verses \$19.5 billion in the House bill), and objects to any provision that prohibits HUD from spending its funds to enforce fair housing laws. The Administration's priorities for 1996 HUD Appropriations are to:

- Ensure that there are adequate funds to operate public housing;
- Support innovative job creation projects in communities through the Economic Development Initiative;
- Transform distressed public housing, including the demolition of obsolete buildings and an increased use of tenant-based assistance;
- Support multifamily property disposition and preservation programs to avoid resident displacement;
- Provide for the homeless

Nan Roman of the National Alliance to End Homelessness commented that some housing advocates fear that HUD will fare worse after the Presidential veto than it is currently because more money will be taken from HUD programs to fund Americorps. In addition, recent developments in Bosnia will mean that no money will be taken from Defense and added back into housing programs, as was previously rumored.

Ben-Ami responded by saying that events after the veto are purely speculation at this point. He noted the concern of housing advocates, and the need to balance things, but also reminded the group that "the President's commitment to Americorps is very strong...and that [program] is something that he will fight for as a number one priority. I understand the tradeoffs within the bill."

ISTOOK AMENDMENT

Ben-Ami announced that the Administration's "Statement of Administration Policy on the Continuing Resolution" that was submitted the week of November 6, cites the Istook amendment as a major reason for vetoing the bill. As support for the position, the Statement included a letter from the Justice Department saying that the provision, which among other things restricts advocacy activities on non-profits that receive federal funds, is unconstitutional.

WELFARE REFORM

On Thursday, November 9, Alice Rivlin of the White House Office of Management and Budget will release a report on the effects of the three different welfare reform bills on poverty rates of children. The study includes analyses of the House version, the Senate version, and the Senate Democratic Alternative for overhauling the welfare system. The study shows, Ben-Ami reported, that the effects of all three are "not positive for children."

Ben-Ami then noted that if the Senate bill had been sent to President Clinton as originally passed, it would have received a Presidential signature. That opportunity is not likely to occur, however, because the Senate bill is in Conference Committee with the House version, and it is already moving to the right. "Any movement to the right," Ben-Ami stressed, "is unacceptable to the President."

"We will do everything we can...to push this bill in the right direction...towards a program that does as much positive as possible and as little negative as possible for children, for immigrants, [and] for people with disabilities."

Ben-Ami also addressed concern over the problems with the minimum wage and the lack of available jobs in rural areas for welfare recipients whose benefits are contingent on work.

While the Administration agrees that the minimum wage should be increased and it is willing to meet with organizations to devise a strategy around the issue, they "believe that real welfare reform involves health care..., child care..., and the Earned Income Tax Credit, to make sure that whatever the job paid, even a minimum wage job, was sufficient to ensure that a family was out of poverty."

In addition, although none of the welfare reform proposals currently on the table specifically deal with the issue of job creation, the Administration believes that "by providing flexibility...with block grants...localities and states can use welfare dollars for wage supplements to produce opportunities in the private sector."



NNC Co-Chair Tom Kenyon, Jeremy Ben-Ami, NNC Co-Chair Nancy Willis, and NNC Executive Director Bud Kanitz

Fielding questions about the elimination of national welfare standards, Ben-Ami noted that in his personal opinion, there will be "places where there will be people who are worse off. [But] the program itself has been so over bureaucratized and so poorly directed that by freeing up states and localities to do more and to do more creative things, I think that a majority of people will be helped by it. But I do believe that there are places where it will not be as well administered as it is with the national standards."

In sum, Ben-Ami said, "the bill can be dramatically improved; yes [the President] would have signed that Senate bill, but that is just not an issue now. If it gets worse than the Senate bill, he won't sign it; if it gets better, he will. We're in negotiations." In fact, Ben-Ami noted, "all of the lobbying from all of the groups involved in this is very helpful and is helping, I be-

lieve, to create an atmosphere in which we might be able to move some things in the right direction."

CONCLUSION

Admitting that all of the news he had brought to the Forum was not good, he reminded the group that there are a lot of bills that the President has now committed to vetoing, and there are a lot of question marks that remain open about what happens after those vetoes. "I wish there was a way to do what we want to with a Congress that opposes everything we want to do," Ben-Ami lamented.

The Administration strategy for the upcoming months, however, is not to frame the issues as a rich-poor dichotomy. "In terms of message, what you will hear us talk about are things that have a more universal appeal, that are framed in terms of broader American values -- education, training, the environment, public health, health -- and that the Republican proposals are an assault on that."

Legislative Updates

ISTOOK AMENDMENT



Joy Terrell of Independent Sector

Joy Terrell of the Independent Sector reported on the "Istook Amendment," a provision that will severely restrict the ability of non-profit organizations -- especially those that receive federal grants -- to speak out for the people they serve. On November 8, the House of representatives attached "Istook" to the Continuing Resolution. The measure passed narrowly, on a vote of 216 - 210, with 17 Republicans voting

against it. Terrell added that Senators John Chafee (R-IA) and Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) sent "Dear Colleague" letters opposing the Istook Amendment. The President has committed himself to vetoing the Continuing Resolution should the amendment be a part of it.

For more information, contact Terrell at 202-223-8100.

COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT ACT

Allen Fishbein of the Center for Community Change reported that Congressional efforts to gut CRA are being waged on two fronts: as part of H.R. 2491, the "Seven Year Balanced Budget Reconciliation bill of 1995", and as part of Regulatory Relief bills.

The good news is that the anti-CRA provisions were deleted from the Budget Reconciliation bill. Although the House budget bill effectively repealed CRA, Senator Paul Sarbanes (D-MD) threatened to invoke the "Byrd Rule" at the Conference Committee by citing the fact that CRA provisions were extraneous to budget savings. When the Republican Parliamentarian agreed with him late November 8, the provisions were removed.

As a side note, Fishbein informed Forum attendees that some Republicans considered establishing a fee for CRA examinations which federal regulators would charge banks as a way of avoiding the "Byrd rule." "One problem was that when they talked to the banking lobbyists they said that they didn't want to pay a fee for that. So that idea fell by the wayside."

The bad news, Fishbein went on to say, is that CRA continues to come up in Regulatory Relief bills. H.R. 2520 has been introduced in the House by Rep. Jim Leach (R-IA), Chairman of the House Banking Committee, but fortunately it has been tied up and has not gone to the House floor. In addition, Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin wrote to Leach opposing efforts to gut CRA.

S. 650, the Senate regulatory relief bill, was stripped of anti-CRA provisions by Senator Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY), Chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, because of intense pressure from his New York constituents. He went so far as to describe the anti-CRA provisions as "a hot potato." However, the bill may go to the floor in late November or early December, and there is a fear that the anti-CRA provisions will be offered as floor amendments at that time.

As an example of the turf fighting that has been going on in the effort to get the House bill passed, Fish-