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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ MEMORANDUM

TO: David Gergen
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DETERMINED TO BE AN
ADMINISTRATIVE MARKING
INITIALS: JAM DATE: 7/27/93
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FROM: Mark Gearan
Bob Boorstin
Michael Waldman
Marla Romash
Rahm Emanuel

DATE: July 19, 1993

RE: Fall calendar

Summary

In preparation for the meeting to discuss the Fall schedule and the apparent collision of the three major issues (health care, NAFTA, reinventing government), we have prepared this memorandum to review the timing and the communications issues involved.

This memorandum will be supplemented with a suggested calendar for the balance of the summer thru Labor Day. The team of Boorstin-Waldman-Romash are the Communications Department leads for the long-term policy coordination tracking the planning of Administration initiatives.

Background

During the transition and at the Camp David retreat, the President listed five priorities for his first year in office. They were: 1) an economic growth package, 2) health care reform, 3) political reform, 4) national service and 5) welfare reform. By the August recess, we will have achieved two major legislative victories: the economic package and national service.

But starting Labor Day, a combination of external deadlines, campaign promises and policy priorities will collide. Contrary to the preceding months, we will no longer be able to push issues aside and focus on the economic package.

Our biggest challenge is to set priorities and timetables for the chief issues: health care, NAFTA and reinventing government. If we fail, we face an overcrowded agenda and a reemergence of the "loss of focus" theme that damaged us during the spring.

Issues and Timing

Health care: The health care proposal was promised for May and then delayed until "after reconciliation." The President has repeatedly promised that health care will come after the economic package passes. Surveys indicate that health care remains the second or third priority (behind job creation) for the vast majority of voters, but also that people fear reform is just

Fall calendar/page two

another promise to be broken. Our core supporters are rapidly losing patience and could block passage by throwing their support to alternative plans.

The final decision making process on health care has been delayed, most recently because of fears that numbers would leak in the midst of the reconciliation debate. A detailed policy and supporting data will be ready for release in mid-September but only if a go-ahead on a final policy process is given immediately.

NAFTA: Deadlines established under fast-track legislation and worries about the upcoming Mexican elections are driving resolution of NAFTA. The President has continued to express his conditional support for the treaty, but avoided making any public time-specific commitments.

Two factors complicate NAFTA timing. First, successful negotiation of the side agreements on labor and the environment. Second, the ongoing lawsuit demanding an environmental impact statement (which the Administration has promised to appeal.)

Reinventing government: The reinventing government task force is scheduled to report on September 7. The task force is proceeding on the assumption that it will reveal its findings and recommendations the week of Labor Day, in a series of major announcements. The National Performance Review is expected to offer significant savings and dramatic changes in government.

Starting as an important priority and part of the President's commitment to change and a government that puts people first, reinventing government has increased in importance in the past several months. As campaign finance reform has lost momentum in Congress and the public becomes increasingly more frustrated with government and politicians, it has become more salient. In addition, surveys indicate that it will prove useful as a watershed issue for those searching for a New Democrat.

Welfare reform: This assumes that the welfare reform task force continues its work through the fall, but that introduction of the plan is delayed until 1994.

Other issues:

In addition to the three big issues, the fall offers other opportunities. These include:

- International jobs summit
- Crime bill
- Continuing immigration legislation
- Education 2000
- Campaign finance reform
- Wetlands

The question on all these issues: do they clutter or help? Should the President's time commitment and public attachment be limited (i.e. signing the crime bill) or developed into a full-scale initiative?

Fall calendar/page three

The problem:

The problem is pretty simple: neither the President, at least in a public sense, nor the Congress can handle the three big issues simultaneously. By trying to do too much, we raise the possibility that we lose everything. From all perspectives -- policy, politics and press -- we need guidance on how to proceed.

The President has indicated to the Vice President that he is eager to launch the reinventing government initiative during the week following Labor Day. The Vice-President could maintain a high profile on the issue for about 10 days, before turning to the next big issue. The Vice President would then carry the initiative forward throughout the fall, with the President returning to the theme in the State of the Union.

The problem is the competing demands of health care reform and NAFTA. Both will require a substantial, if not exclusive, commitment of Presidential time and public identification for a minimum of several months. Both require consideration by some of the same Congressional committees. And both require assembling difficult, if different, alliances in order to secure Congressional passage.

Some have argued that the very nature of these different alliances may allow, indeed demand, that health care and NAFTA proceed simultaneously. Others doubt that the Congressional process -- and the difficulty of securing passage of either program -- will allow them to proceed hand in hand.

Conclusion

We urgently need guidance on establishing priorities and a chronology for resolving the traffic jam created by reinventing government, health care reform and NAFTA. In the cases of health care and NAFTA, failure to take immediate action threatens the ability of policy teams to present final proposals in time for September action. Failure to decide also means that we could return to the "loss of focus" theme that injured the President's standing during the spring.