

FOIA MARKER

This is not a textual record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

Collection/Record Group: Clinton Presidential Records

Subgroup/Office of Origin: Public Liaison

Series/Staff Member: Alexis Herman/Ruby Moy

Subseries:

OA/ID Number: 6275

FolderID:

Folder Title:

Statement by Nernice Friedlander

Stack:

S

Row:

30

Section:

1

Shelf:

6

Position:

3

FEB 28 1995

United States
Office of Consumer Affairs

750 17th St., NW, Washington, DC 20008 Fax # (202) 395-7901

TO: Ms. Alexis Herman

Office telephone #: 202/ 456-6455

Fax: 456-6218

FROM:

SANDY AGUILAR

Office telephone #: 202/ 395-7913

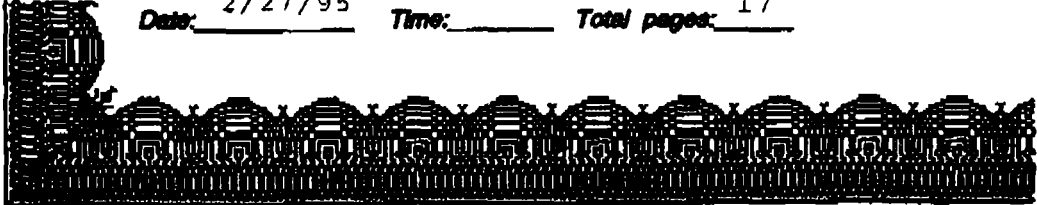
MESSAGE:

FYI - USOCA Testimony presented to the

House and Senate Subcommittees on VA-HUD-

and Independent Agencies on February 23,
and February 24, respectively.

Date: 2/27/95 *Time:* _____ *Total pages:* 17



NOTE: Bernice Friedlander, Acting Director, and I would like to meet with you at your earliest convenience anytime after March 10th. I will call your office for an appointment. Thanks. Sandy

**Statement by Bernice Friedlander
Acting Director
U.S. Office of Consumer Affairs
before the
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on VA-HUD-Independent Agencies
February 23, 1995**

Good Morning, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased and honored to come before you today as Acting Director of the U.S. Office of Consumer Affairs. Accompanying me today is Waverly Land, our Director of Legislative Affairs and Administration and Sandra Aguilar, Special Assistant to the Director.

I am here to present our FY 1996 budget request -- I believe you already have copies in hand -- in which we request \$1,811,000 and 13 Full-Time Equivalent staff positions.

Let me highlight USOCA's range of current initiatives.

EXPO '95

First, we are looking forward to sponsoring the 8th Biennial Constituent Resource Exposition here in the Cannon Caucus Room on March 13. Better known as EXPO, this has been one of the most popular informational events on the Hill for Members and Congressional staff. Mr. Chairman, we are extremely pleased to have your support as a Congressional Sponsor this year. Your staff has been most helpful. Without your support we could not hold this important and useful event. And I want to express appreciation to Congressman Stokes, who was our Congressional sponsor in 1993, for agreeing to be a co-sponsor this year.

Since 1981, we have presented EXPO at the beginning of each new Congress. As in the past, this year's EXPO is intended to help Members of Congress and their staffs better utilize available Federal resources to assist with constituent complaints and inquiries and to reduce the cost in time, money and frustration of responding to consumer problems.

To further assist Congress and Congressional staff, USOCA will also be distributing an updated Congressional Liaison Handbook, which lists the names, addresses and telephone numbers of Congressional liaison officials and consumer specialists within each of the Federal agencies. To give you an idea of its popularity, we distributed over 10,000 copies to staff during the last EXPO.

National Consumers Week

Know Your Consumer Rights was the theme of National Consumers Week 1994 which took place in October. In his proclamation of NCW, President Clinton added the "Right to Service" to the Consumer Bill of Rights, first articulated by President Kennedy in 1962 and added to by President Ford in 1975, who referred to them as a "way of life" in our marketplace. Consumer organizations, schools, government agencies and the private sector sponsored workshops, seminars, exhibits, contests and other activities designed both to teach consumers about their rights and responsibilities as buyers and encourage consumers to exercise wise spending decisions.

Our National Consumers Week poster was printed in English, Spanish, Chinese and Korean and was distributed to organizations and groups to post in public areas such as libraries, schools, fraternal organizations, business and local government offices. Additionally, we published and distributed 100,000 copies of the brochure, **Know Your Consumer Rights**, in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Korean. Back in 1992, we started expanding the number of languages in which we print NCW materials. Our goal is to succeed in reaching consumers whose first language is not English. We have enjoyed good support from the business community in order to make this possible.

We are working with more than 50 corporations, government agencies and consumer organizations to plan National Consumers Week 1995. This year's theme will be built around how the concept of service applies to various sectors of the marketplace. For example, an NCW conference focusing on service issues relating to the Information Superhighway is being developed; a major insurance company is looking into sponsoring town meetings in low income areas that explains the basics about insurance and warns consumers about rip-offs. With the cooperation of a major telecommunications company we are considering sponsorship of a national teleconference which would bring consumers and experts together in five or more cities to discuss improved customer service. These are just a few of our early plans for the 1995 effort.

National Information Infrastructure

Because of our active role in consumer privacy issues since the Bush Administration, we took the lead this year by coordinating two public hearings held in January regarding privacy and the National Information Infrastructure -- one in Sacramento, California and the other in Washington, D.C. The information gathered at these hearings is being used by the Working Group on Privacy, part of the President's Information Infrastructure Task Force, in developing recommendations on policies to protect consumer privacy. The goal of this Task Force is to guide the development of the communications infrastructure that will evolve over the next five to ten years.

USOCA identified privacy as a major consumer protection issue quite some time ago. Because of our work on this issue, our office is perceived by both the business and consumer communities as an advocate for balanced measures that protect the privacy of individuals -- which surveys show is a significant issue with an overwhelming number of citizens -- while new technologies evolve that help grow our economy in the new Information Age.

Consumer's Resource Handbook

Once again we are in the process of revising the Consumer's Resource Handbook. We are planning to release updated listings this summer. Additionally, we will reprint the front part of the Handbook in Spanish. We are also discussing funding of the printing costs with private sector organizations, pursuant to the gift acceptance authorization Congress has conferred on USOCA for consumer education and information activities. We anticipate printing about 300,000 copies in 1995. As many of you know, single copies of this popular Handbook is distributed free of charge to citizens through the Consumer Information Center in Pueblo, Colorado. USOCA covers postage and handling of the distribution.

Outreach to Older Americans and Disabled Consumers

USOCA has provided consumer education materials and conducted workshops at a variety of conferences and seminars sponsored by organizations representing elderly and consumers with disabilities. We sponsored a special seminar during Older Americans Month addressing the consumer problems of the elderly. Just last week (February 15), together with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and the National Association of Consumer Agency Administrators, we co-sponsored a Mini-Conference on the Consumer Concerns of Older Americans as part of the White House Conference on Aging scheduled for May. More than 60 older consumers, government officials, and consumer leaders discussed and made recommendations on consumer issues and policies impacting the elderly. These recommendations will be forwarded to the White House Conference on Aging staff for use in developing the Conference. Our future activities in this area include participation with AARP on the Disability, Aging and Dispute Resolution Conference in April and coordinating an Older Americans Month Forum in May for the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals in Business.

Underserved Consumers

USOCA is recognized by other Federal agencies, consumer organizations and the private sector for its leadership in outreach to traditionally underserved consumers. In addition to providing *National Consumers Week* and other materials in Spanish, Chinese, Korean staff has conducted workshops and exhibited at conferences sponsored by minority and community-based organizations. These have included the National Council of La Raza, National Image, Blacks In Government and the Hispanic

Leadership Conference. In Denver last May we sponsored a National Conference on Reaching Diverse Consumers. Co-sponsored with the NAACP, AARP, National Council of La Raza, and the Center for Independent Living, the conference attracted community leaders from throughout the country. Conference participants developed a "National BLUEPRINT for Reaching Diverse Consumers." We will be disseminating the BLUEPRINT to government agencies, consumer organizations and the private sector to use in more effectively targeting information to consumers. Town meeting-style gatherings are being planned for cities throughout the country to provide an opportunity for traditionally underserved consumers to discuss their consumer problems. These forums will be co-sponsored with community organizations, other Federal, state or local government agencies, and Members of Congress.

Other Outreach Efforts

Our efforts to educate consumers to protect themselves against fraud continue, both through promotion and distribution of our consumer education materials and our work with the Alliance Against Fraud in Telemarketing and the Department of Justice Telemarketing Working Group. Our principal publication in this area, *Too Good to Be True*, which explains how to recognize and avoid the most common types of fraud, is available in Spanish, Chinese and Korean, as well as English. With marketplace fraud costing consumers an estimated \$100 billion or more each year and apprehension of fraud operators so difficult, we and our partners in fraud prevention are looking for additional ways of drawing consumers' attention to the problem, such as a national conference on consumer fraud, public service announcements and multi-media placements.

Our latest project is the installation of an 800 Hotline. The purpose is to permit consumers to call USOCA directly to get information and referral assistance for their consumer problems. At the present time, many consumers write and call us directly with their problems. A good many more are referred to us by Congressional offices because the staff there do not have the resources to adequately respond to these inquiries. The average consumer doesn't know whether to call the Food and Drug Administration or the Food and Nutrition Service, the FTC or the FCC. We hope that through this experimental hotline, we will successfully improve customer service and guide citizens to the best sources of remedy for their complaints.

Our principal goal for FY 96 is to assist the President in achieving his promise to use the machinery of government to solve the problems of real people. We are the office which puts people first by giving consumers a real voice. We want to help create an environment that empowers people to make well-informed consumer decisions. We are an office that facilitates good consumer relations between business, trade associations, consumer groups, underserved consumers and governmental agencies.

This office will provide the consumer's voice in the President's domestic policy initiatives such as the development of the Information Superhighway and improving government responsiveness to the public.

The U.S. Office of Consumer Affairs will continue to provide leadership in consumer information and education, privacy protection and prevention of fraud.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of our FY 1996 budget request.

Statement by

Bernice Friedlander

Acting Director

U.S. Office of Consumer Affairs

before the

Subcommittee on VA-HUD-Independent Agencies

Senate Appropriations Committee

February 24, 1995

Good Morning, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased and honored to come before you today as Acting Director of the U.S. Office of Consumer Affairs. Accompanying me today are Waverly Land, our Director of Legislative Affairs and Administration and Sandra Aguilar, Special Assistant to the Director.

I am here to present our FY 1996 budget request -- I believe you already have copies in hand -- in which we request \$1,811,000 and 13 Full-Time Equivalent staff positions.

Let me highlight USOCA's range of current initiatives.

EXPO '95

First, we are looking forward to sponsoring the 8th Biennial Constituent Resource Exposition here in the Cannon Caucus Room on March 13. Better known as EXPO, this has been one of the most popular informational events on the Hill for Members and staff. Since 1981, we have presented EXPO at the beginning of each new Congress.

As in the past, this year's EXPO is intended to help Senators and Members of Congress and their staffs better utilize available Federal resources to assist with constituent complaints and inquiries and to reduce

the cost in time, money and frustration of responding to consumer problems.

To further assist you and your staff, USOCA will also be distributing an updated Congressional Liaison Handbook, which lists the names, addresses and telephone numbers of Congressional liaison officials and consumer specialists within each of the Federal agencies. To give you an idea of its popularity, we distributed over 10,000 copies to staff during the last EXPO. We also mailed one to each of your state offices in order to assist your offices where complaint handling is the heaviest.

National Consumers Week

Know Your Consumer Rights was the theme of National Consumers Week 1994 which took place in October. In his proclamation of NCW, President Clinton added the "Right to Service" to the *Consumer Bill of Rights*, first articulated by President Kennedy in 1962 and added to by President Ford in 1975, who referred to them as a "way of life" in our marketplace. Consumer organizations, schools, government agencies and the private sector sponsored workshops, seminars, exhibits, contests and other activities designed both to teach consumers about their

rights and responsibilities as buyers and encourage consumers to exercise wise spending decisions.

Our National Consumers Week poster was printed in English, Spanish, Chinese and Korean and was distributed to organizations and groups to post in public areas such as libraries, schools, fraternal organizations, business and local government offices. Additionally, we published and distributed 100,000 copies of the brochure, *Know Your Consumer Rights*, in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Korean. Back in 1992, we started expanding the number of languages in which we print NCW materials. Our goal is to succeed in reaching consumers whose first language is not English. We have enjoyed good support from the business community in order to make this possible.

We are working with more than 50 corporations, government agencies and consumer organizations to plan National Consumers Week 1995. This year's theme will be built around how the concept of *service* applies to various sectors of the marketplace. For example, an NCW conference focusing on service issues relating to the Information Superhighway is being developed; a major insurance company is looking into sponsoring town meetings in low income areas that explains the basics about insurance and warns consumers about rip-offs. With the

cooperation of a major telecommunications company we are considering sponsorship of a national teleconference which would bring consumers and experts together in five or more cities to discuss improved customer service. These are just a few of our early plans for the 1995 effort.

National Information Infrastructure

Because of our active role in consumer privacy issues since the Bush Administration, we took the lead this year by coordinating two public hearings held in January regarding privacy and the National Information Infrastructure -- one in Sacramento, California and the other in Washington, D.C. The information gathered at these hearings is being used by the Working Group on Privacy, part of the President's Information Infrastructure Task Force, in developing recommendations on policies to protect consumer privacy. The goal of this Task Force is to guide the development of the communications infrastructure that will evolve over the next five to ten years. USOCA identified privacy as a major consumer protection issue quite some time ago. Because of our work on this issue, our office is perceived by both the business and consumer communities as an advocate for balanced measures that protect the privacy of individuals -- which surveys show is a significant issue with an overwhelming number of citizens -- while new technologies evolve that help grow our economy in the new Information Age.

Consumer's Resource Handbook

Once again we are in the process of revising the Consumer's Resource Handbook. We are planning to release updated listings this summer. Additionally, we will reprint the front part of the Handbook in Spanish. We are also discussing funding of the printing costs with private sector organizations, pursuant to the gift acceptance authorization Congress has conferred on USOCA for consumer education and information activities. We anticipate printing about 300,000 copies in 1995. As many of you know, single copies of this popular Handbook is distributed free of charge to citizens through the Consumer Information Center in Pueblo, Colorado. USOCA covers postage and handling of the distribution.

Outreach to Older Americans and Disabled Consumers

USOCA has provided consumer education materials and conducted workshops at a variety of conferences and seminars sponsored by organizations representing elderly and consumers with disabilities. We sponsored a special seminar during Older Americans Month addressing the consumer problems of the elderly. Just last week (February 15), together with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and the National Association of Consumer Agency Administrators, we co-sponsored a Mini-Conference on the Consumer Concerns of Older

Americans as part of the White House Conference on Aging scheduled for May. More than 60 older consumers, government officials, and consumer leaders discussed and made recommendations on consumer issues and policies impacting the elderly. These recommendations will be forwarded to the White House Conference on Aging staff for use in developing the Conference. Our future activities in this area include participation with AARP on the Disability, Aging and Dispute Resolution Conference in April and coordinating an Older Americans Month Forum in May for the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals in Business.

Underserved Consumers

USOCA is recognized by other Federal agencies, consumer organizations and the private sector for its leadership in outreach to traditionally underserved consumers. In addition to providing *National Consumers Week* and other materials in Spanish, Chinese, Korean staff has conducted workshops and exhibited at conferences sponsored by minority and community-based organizations. These have included the National Council of La Raza, National Image, Blacks In Government and the Hispanic Leadership Conference. In Denver last May we sponsored a National Conference on Reaching Diverse Consumers. Co-sponsored with the NAACP, AARP, National Council of La Raza, and the Center for Independent Living, the conference attracted community leaders from

throughout the country. Conference participants developed a "National BLUEPRINT for Reaching Diverse Consumers." We will be disseminating the BLUEPRINT to government agencies, consumer organizations and the private sector to use in more effectively targeting information to consumers. Town meeting-style gatherings are being planned for cities throughout the country to provide an opportunity for traditionally underserved consumers to discuss their consumer problems. These forums will be co-sponsored with community organizations, other Federal, state or local government agencies, and Members of Congress.

Other Outreach Efforts

Our efforts to educate consumers to protect themselves against fraud continue, both through promotion and distribution of our consumer education materials and our work with the Alliance Against Fraud in Telemarketing and the Department of Justice Telemarketing Working Group. Our principal publication in this area, *Too Good to Be True*, which explains how to recognize and avoid the most common types of fraud, is available in Spanish, Chinese and Korean, as well as English. With marketplace fraud costing consumers an estimated \$100 billion or more each year and apprehension of fraud operators so difficult, we and our partners in fraud prevention are looking for additional ways of drawing consumers' attention to the problem, such as a national

conference on consumer fraud, public service announcements and multi-media placements.

Our latest project is the installation of an 800 Hotline. The purpose is to permit consumers to call USOCA directly to get information and referral assistance for their consumer problems. At the present time, many consumers write and call us directly with their problems. A good many more are referred to us by Congressional offices because the staff there do not have the resources to adequately respond to these inquiries. The average consumer doesn't know whether to call the Food and Drug Administration or the Food and Nutrition Service, the FTC or the FCC. We hope that through this experimental hotline, we will successfully improve customer service and guide citizens to the best sources of remedy for their complaints.

Our principal goal for FY 96 is to assist the President in achieving his promise to use the machinery of government to solve the problems of real people. We are the office which puts people first by giving consumers a real voice. We want to help create an environment that empowers people to make well-informed consumer decisions. We are an office that facilitates good consumer relations between business, trade associations, consumer groups, underserved consumers and governmental

agencies.

This office will provide the consumer's voice in the President's domestic policy initiatives such as the development of the Information Superhighway and improving government responsiveness to the public.

The U.S. Office of Consumer Affairs will continue to provide leadership in consumer information and education, privacy protection and prevention of fraud.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of our FY 1996 budget request.