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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

August 6, 1998
(House Floor)

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

(THIS STATEMENT HAS BEEN COORDINATED BY OMB WITH THE CONCERNED AGENCIES.)

H.R. 4380 – DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA APPROPRIATIONS BILL, FY 1999

(Sponsors: Livingston (R); Louisiana; Taylor (R), North Carolina)

This Statement of Administration Policy provides the Administration's views on H.R. 4380, the District of Columbia Appropriations Bill, FY 1999, as reported by the House Appropriations Committee.

The Administration appreciates the Committee's support in developing a bill that provides sufficient Federal funding to implement the National Capital Revitalization and Self-Government and Improvement Act of 1997 successfully. While the Committee bill is an improvement over the Subcommittee version of the bill, the Administration is deeply concerned about inadequate funding for the D.C. economic development initiative and objects to a number of provisions of the Committee bill, as described below. We urge the House to adopt a bill that addresses the Administration's concerns.

Economic Development Initiative

The Administration has requested \$100 million for an economic development initiative in the District of Columbia: \$50 million to capitalize the locally-chartered National Capital Revitalization Corporation (NCRC), \$25 million for critically needed management reforms authorized by the Revitalization Act and related to the city's economic development infrastructure, and \$25 million for Metrorail improvements that would support the Washington Convention Center project. We appreciate the Committee's action to provide \$25 million to support transportation improvements associated with the Washington Convention Center, as requested, as well as \$21 million for infrastructure improvements in the District. However, we regret that the Committee has provided no funding for critically needed management reforms or funding to capitalize the locally-chartered NCRC. The Administration strongly urges the Committee to appropriate additional resources for economic development.

Public Education

The Administration appreciates the Committee's full support of charter schools and other public schools in the District and supports the Committee's appropriation of \$20.4 million in Federal funding for D.C. charter schools.

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Abortion

The Administration strongly opposes the abortion language of the Committee bill, which would prohibit the use of both Federal and District funds to pay for abortions except in those cases where the life of the mother is endangered or in situations involving rape or incest. The Administration continues to view the prohibition on the use of local funds as an unwarranted intrusion into the affairs of the District and would support an amendment, if offered, to strike this prohibition.

Micromanagement

The Administration opposes provisions of the Committee bill that would further restrict or otherwise condition management of the District Government, thereby undercutting the Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority's (the Authority's) oversight and responsibility for the District's budget and financial condition. Further, the Administration is concerned about provisions that would undermine the responsibilities of the Superintendent of the District of Columbia Public Schools by legislating how local funds are used for salaries and pay raises.

Reducing teen smoking is a high priority of the Administration; therefore, we support the objective of the amendment made in order related to the possession of tobacco products by minors. However, the Administration opposes the amendment in its current form. Since Congress does not legislate specific laws for individual States, it would be inappropriate to do so for the District of Columbia. Presently, the District of Columbia law bans the sale of tobacco to minors under 18 years of age. We urge the House to modify this amendment to make it a sense of the Congress amendment.

The Administration understands that an amendment may be offered that would restore local funding for the District of Columbia Advisory Neighborhood Commissions. The Administration supports this amendment.

The Administration is committed to working with the House to produce a bill that will assist the District in its continued efforts toward financial recovery. We look forward to working with the House to address our mutual concerns.

Objectionable Amendments

The Administration understands that three amendments may be offered that would seriously undermine local control. If such amendments were adopted and included in the bill presented to the President, his senior advisers would recommend that the President veto the bill.

- An amendment to provide for the use of private school vouchers in the District. We would strongly oppose any legislation allowing the use of Federal taxpayer funds for private school vouchers. Instead of investing additional resources in public schools, vouchers would allow a few selected students to attend private schools and would draw

resources and attention away from the hard work of reforming public schools that serve the overwhelming majority of D.C. students. Establishing a private school voucher system in the Nation's Capital would set a dangerous precedent for using Federal taxpayer funds for schools that are not accountable to the public.

- An amendment that would prohibit adoptions in the District by couples that are unmarried or not related by blood.
- An amendment that would prohibit the use of Federal and local funds for needle exchange programs and would prohibit private agencies from supporting needle exchange programs if they receive Federal or local funds (even if the funds used for the needle exchange programs are their own).