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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY
Tuesday, 8/24/65
11:00 a.m.

STATEMENT BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE
ORGANIZATION OF THE CONGRESS
Representative Bob Dole
1st Congressional District -- Kansas

Chairman Monroney, Chairman Madden, members of the Joint Committee on the Organization of the Congress.

In an effort to be prepared and to avoid repetition, I have scanned the hearings conducted by this Committee from May 10 to May 20, 1965, and have also read the July 8 Interim Report of the Committee. A hurried reading of this material indicates the difficulty of your assignment and the importance, in my opinion, of members appearing and making some contribution to the efforts of this distinguished Committee. The fact only slightly more than 10 per cent of the Representatives and Senators appeared prior to July 8 may either indicate lack of interest in reorganization of the Congress or reluctance of members to offer testimony that in many respects is necessarily repetitive but, nonetheless, it underscores your difficult assignment.

With less than five years' experience in Congress, I do not offer any pat solutions or revolutionary suggestions to insure improved functioning of the world's greatest deliberative body. I do have suggestions which, in my humble opinion, deserve serious attention. They are as follows:

1. The present basic-pay concept of clerk hire should either be sharply revised or abolished. Many who have testified previously have expressed similar views. It does seem a gross amount could be provided each member and that he could be trusted to make a proper division without the necessity of using a slide rule.

2. Without question, the Committees should have more adequate Minority staffing. I was assigned to the House Committee on Agriculture when elected to the Congress in 1961. The ratio on that Committee at that time was 21 Democrats to 14 Republicans, and the Minority had one staff member. The Republican position has worsened since then -- 24 Democrats to 11 Republicans -- but we still have only two Minority staff members of a total of 13. The other staff members are very capable, efficient, cooperative, and helpful, but their loyalties necessarily lie with the Chairman and Majority members.

The spirit of fair play, if nothing else, demands that Minority staffing be improved, perhaps based on the ratio of Majority-Minority members on a particular committee.

3. We continue to read various articles about the cost of keeping a Congressman in Congress, his unlimited fringe benefits, and of other alleged abuses of his office. Much of this criticism is not well-founded, but at the same time every effort should be made to remove any cloud of doubt the public may have.

Frankly, I find it difficult -- though I know the reason -- to understand why a member receives haircuts at reduced cost, or for that matter, without any cost. I find it difficult to understand why it is necessary that we provide space and salary for a Minority and a Majority printer. I find it difficult to justify payment to a member of any unused portion of their annual stationery allowance. A "use it or lose it" policy should be adopted.

These are only three areas, and without question, others need critical consideration. Members are entitled to have services conveniently available, but wherever possible, facilities and services should be placed on a strictly business basis.

4. I would agree with others that attendance at committee meetings should be made part of the public record. I would also suggest that some standardized procedure be devised so that members of a particular committee would have at least one week's notice of committee hearings and would have advance copies of statements by witnesses. In my opinion, there is no greater waste of time than attending a committee meeting and listening to a half dozen witnesses read their statements. The reading consumes a great portion of the time available; hence, members are often cautioned to limit questions or, for that matter, not to ask any at all unless absolutely necessary. In effect, we have "listenings", not "hearings". If a member is not interested and does not prepare himself in advance, then, in any event, he probably contributes very little in the committee. If notice were given in advance and advance copies of testimony made available, members could go to the committee ready to ask questions. This would increase committee attendance, in my opinion, and, in addition, witnesses should be on notice that they must come prepared, not just to read to the members, but to answer searching questions.

5. I would recommend legislation authorizing anyone having a bonafide judgment against a member of Congress to institute appropriate garnishment, attachment, execution, or other proper proceedings in efforts to satisfy such judgment. Members of Congress certainly should be held accountable for their just debts, and if judgment is rendered on a valid obligation, a member should not be permitted to escape satisfaction of it.

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Perhaps appointive federal officials and employees should be exempt from garnishment or execution, but I see no reason to permit an elected official, particularly a member of Congress, who is really only a quasi-federal employee, to avoid payment of just debts.

6. Members of Congress should be prohibited from making announcements of federal grants, contracts, or other federal awards, projects, or cost sharing programs unless Congressional approval of such grant, project, contract or cost sharing program is required. Certainly members should have notice of everything involving their district or state, but in those circumstances where the grant or award is the result of purely administrative action, there is little reason for a member to make any announcement.

Many times members are, in effect, competing with each other in making an announcement concerning a project they never heard of until some federal agency notified their offices.

In addition -- for reasons unknown to me -- a Senator of the Majority Party is given notice before a Senator of the Minority Party in states having one of each party. If both Senators represent the Minority Party, it is customary they be notified prior to notifying the affected Congressman even though he is a member of the same party. If a member of the Majority Party, the Congressman can perhaps "scoop" the Minority Senators. These are only some of the possibilities of what happens when a \$2000 sewer grant is awarded to Mudville, U.S.A. The great majority of the folks back home probably understand what is really happening, but it seems to me many of these announcements should be made by the agency directly involved or perhaps by a "Congressional Clearing House".

Everyone likes to announce good news, but not many members rushed to the press to announce the closing of military installations a few months ago. It's not what you do here -- but what you announce you have done.

Today's practice permits Congressmen to announce the awarding of contracts, grants, or cost sharing programs in advance of official notice to the press. The unmistakable inference is that the Senator or Congressman was somehow responsible, and by making the announcement the legislator may obtain political advantage. We all recognize government contracts should not be awarded or projects approved because of political influence; hence there exists a wrong which should be corrected.

7. Terms of members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate.

I trust it is not inappropriate for a member of the House of Representatives to suggest a Constitutional amendment providing that the terms of U. S. Senators be four

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years. The Philadelphia Convention debated the terms of Senators, and according to information furnished by the Library of Congress, many different views were expressed. Terms of 7 years, 5 years, 9 years, and 4 years were suggested, while Mr. George Read of Delaware and Mr. Robert Morse of Pennsylvania proposed that Senators hold office "during good behavior". The six-year term was apparently a compromise, with the Convention rejecting a 9-year term by a vote of 3 to 8 and adopting a term of six years by a vote of 7 to 4.

We are familiar with the reasons for the longer term and perhaps recall that Madison reminded the delegates that the Senate was designed to protect the people against themselves as well as against their rulers, against their own hasty and ill-advised decisions -- a purpose more likely to be secured if its members were given long terms and so gained experience. There is still merit in this argument and, without question, the term of a United States Senator should be longer than that of a House member to allow them to reflect on the issues and to give reasoned judgment detached day-to-day pressures exerted on the members of the House. It is obvious I likewise oppose increasing the terms of House members to four years. In my opinion, Congress can best meet the demands of present day America by keeping House terms at two years and reducing Senate terms to four. I would propose that one-half the members of the U. S. Senate be elected every two years, and to avoid obvious opposition in the Senate, suggest that Senators presently serving have an opportunity for one additional six-year term which would make the effective date of my proposed Constitutional amendment 1976. As justification of this suggestion, it does appear that reducing the terms of Senators to four years would speed up the legislative process, would result in closer liaison between members of the House and the Senate and, frankly, would tend to make the Senate a more responsive body.

Let me also state that, in my opinion, it would be a serious mistake to change the terms of members of the House of Representatives from two to four years. One way to avoid "Potomac Fever" is to know that every two years you must face the electorate and that in many districts the people back home expect to see you in the district as often as possible. A four-year term could conceivably give a member a three-year vacation and one year of hard campaigning. The argument that a four-year term would reduce campaign costs is highly speculative in my opinion, and the result might well be that twice as much would be spent every four years. There are other things that can be done to limit the cost of campaigning without depriving the people of the right of re-electing or rejecting their Congressman.

Summary: I have attempted briefly to set forth some specific suggestions along

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with general comments about terms of members of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Needless to say, I have only scratched the surface, and time would not permit a more exhaustive study of many other suggested changes offered by other witnesses before this Committee. It appears to me that one big task facing all of us is to improve the image of Congress, and this can be done by making our business the public's business. I trust the recommendations of this Committee will restore our Constitutional position as a co-equal branch of government.

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