

STATEMENT ON THE OPENING OF CONGRESS

by

The Urban Coalition

January 12, 1968

As the new year begins and the second session of the 90th Congress convenes, The Urban Coalition reaffirms its call for recognition of the compelling needs of the people of our nation's cities and for immediate and positive action to meet those needs. No longer can this country tolerate the serious unemployment, housing deficiencies, educational disparities and urban decay which plague urban America. The Urban Coalition calls upon American citizens to insist that this session of Congress enact the legislation necessary to restore health to our cities.

The nation can no longer ignore the intolerable conditions of life which cripple too many of our fellow citizens and induce the widespread discontent and disorder which have erupted year after year, warning America that it is not meeting its responsibilities to its own people.

The Urban Coalition, broadly representative of American business, labor, religion, civil rights and local government, pledges its firm and continued support for a re-ordering of national priorities and a commitment of national resources equal to meeting these responsibilities. The substantial number of communities forming counterpart Urban Coalitions all over the country is strong evidence that the citizens of our urban areas share the Urban Coalition's concern and its commitment. With the commitment of its citizens this nation has the capacity now to resolve its urban problems.

We call upon the Congress, the Administration and the nation to move without delay on urban programs. The Administration's Open Housing legislation should be enacted into law now.

Definite steps should be taken now to assure government-generated employment to every citizen able and willing to work but unable to find private employment.

The Administration's Safe Streets and Crime Control Act and Juvenile Delinquency amendments were drastically altered in the House of Representatives last year to channel the programs and funds through a state planning and allocation process which would delay and frustrate their effectiveness. The original Administration version of these bills should be passed by the Senate so as to mount an efficient and effective attack on the root causes of violence, crime and delinquency coupled with the development of improved local law enforcement.

A supplementary appropriation bill should be immediately introduced and enacted to fund fully the President's anti-poverty programs as authorized for this fiscal year.

Programs for low and moderate income housing, urban development, model cities, mass transportation and community facilities should be extended, expanded and adequately funded now.

The repressive welfare program amendments enacted last year, penalizing children born into one-parent homes and shifting the financing burden to local government, should be repealed immediately.

We know these legislative aims are more easily stated than accomplished. But we also know the needs are massive and urgent, and the hour is late. We pledge our full support for the legislative action required and ask the help of Congress and the nation.

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