

November 7, 1968

MEMORANDUM

TO : Steering Committee  
FROM : Local Coalition Task Force  
SUBJECT: Report on the Organization and Establishment of  
Local Urban Coalitions

In the national statement of goals, principles and commitments adopted by the Emergency Convocation, the Steering Committee called for the establishment of local urban coalitions throughout the country. The Task Force on Local Coalitions has been assigned the responsibility of overseeing developments and progress of these local coalitions.

At its meeting on October 17, the Task Force heard reports from the Local Coalition Division staff on its activities. While most of the staff has been on board little more than three months, visits have been made to all of the cities where coalitions were reported to have been in some state of organization or existence. In addition, the staff has been to 72 cities where interest has been expressed by one element or another in establishing a coalition. The staff reported the status of coalitions as follows:

- a. Applying the tough new standards established by the Task Force, one-third of the original coalitions (11 of 34) failed to meet the minimum criteria.
- b. The remaining 23 coalitions are proceeding with staff

assistance to organize task forces, develop programs and engage in fund-raising.

- c. Sixteen strong new coalitions, meeting Task Force standards, have been established giving us a total of 39.
- d. Thirty-two additional priority cities have been identified and are the focus of staff organizing efforts.

The staff is moving forward steadily establishing new coalitions and strengthening those we already have. However, the staff is encountering significant impediments to their organization efforts.

1. There has been a clear and noticeable shift in national public opinion. The sense of urgency concerning the urban crisis which existed in 1967 and early 1968 has diminished. There is greater reluctance to engage public and private resources at the local level in a coalition movement, particularly at this time. A quiet summer has contributed to this shift of opinion, but so too has the political campaign.

2. There is occasional lack of support from the top leadership necessary to form a coalition. While business, labor and mayors in many communities are providing leadership and support, the staff has been encountering reluctance by key individuals of one or more of these elements to the establishment of coalitions in some cities.

The establishment of quality coalitions takes on special importance since the national credibility of the Urban Coalition in part will be determined by the role, image and status of the local urban coalitions. To be effective, local coalitions must have as their active members the most influential and highly regarded leaders of each of the various elements.

Despite the best efforts of the staff, it is not always possible to engage the attention and support of these key individuals without the direct, personal involvement of Steering Committee members. Where national Steering Committee members have become involved whether by a telephone call, letter, visit, or the convening of a meeting, the organizing effort has moved far more rapidly and has attracted key leaders.

RECOMMENDATION:

For these reasons we wish to recommend with the utmost urgency that the Steering Committee adopt a resolution calling on each member to accept increased responsibility for the organization of local coalitions and when called upon to do so to be of assistance in the following ways:

- a. Advise the staff of key leaders in priority cities who are known to Steering Committee members and who could be instrumental in the establishment of a coalition.
- b. At the request of the staff, write or telephone individuals urging their support of a coalition.

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- c. Accept speaking engagements in local communities on behalf of the organizing effort.
- d. Advise the staff on general strategies to be followed in particularly difficult situations.
- e. In public appearances and speaking engagements, identify with the Urban Coalition and urge support for the local coalition movement.

In order to help meet immediate organizing needs of the coalition, Steering Committee members are requested to list on the attached list the names of one or two key individuals in the cities who are known to Steering Committee members and who could be instrumental in the establishment of a coalition. The staff will call on these individuals to enlist their support and cooperation.

Steering Committee members may leave the attached form following the meeting.

Attachment