

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

September 12, 1983

The Honorable Howard H. Baker, Jr.
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-233 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Howard:

We request that you schedule prompt action on H.R. 2230, the House-passed bill, already on the Senate Calendar, to reauthorize The Civil Rights Commission.

The national controversy over the recent nominations of new Commissioners should not obscure the fact that the Commission's authority will expire on September 30, only 15 work days after the Senate's return from recess. This is precious little time to obtain Senate passage of a bill, House agreement and Presidential signature. Moreover, orderly process demands that the Commission's future status be resolved before any decision is made on whether to advise and consent to the replacement of any sitting Commissioner.

The tight deadline is especially troubling, given the reported intention of the Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Constitution to defer action on the Commission's reauthorization until senators vote on the pending nominations. While H.R. 2230 has already passed the House with overwhelming bipartisan support for its key provisions, the Senate counterpart has lain dormant for months in the Senate Judiciary Committee. No hearings have been held. One was cancelled suddenly just before the recess.


Whatever the purported reasons for delay, the appearance that the Commission's existence is being held hostage to approval of the President's nominees is disturbing. It will not reflect credit on the Administration or the Senate. It cannot advance dispassionate consideration of the nominations. And it will jeopardize the life of an agency that, as six prior Presidents have affirmed, embodies the nation's ongoing commitment to equal justice.

While we may not all agree on the pending nominations, we are unanimous on the priorities. The immediate need, taking precedence over all else, is to extend the life of the Commission in a way that preserves its independence. Only then is it reasonable and fair to ask our colleagues to decide how to dispose of these nominations. To consider the nominations before the Commission's future existence is ensured is to invite needless and protracted debate on the Senate floor.

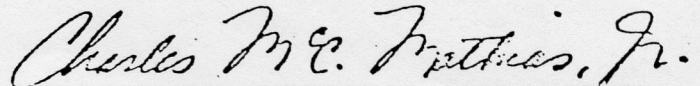
The House bill provides for a five-year extension of the Commission and removal of Commissioners only for cause. Some Senators may prefer different provisions. The prospect of floor debate and amendments, as well as a possible conference with the House and the ten-day period for Presidential review, leaves us no choice. If the Commission is to survive, we must proceed directly to take up H.R. 2230 from the Calendar. As a practical matter, processing the Senate bill through subcommittee and committee is no longer even an option.

Therefore, we urge that you schedule H.R. 2230 for debate at the earliest possible date, in order to ensure the continuation of the Civil Rights Commission's impressive 25-year record of service to the civil rights of all our citizens.

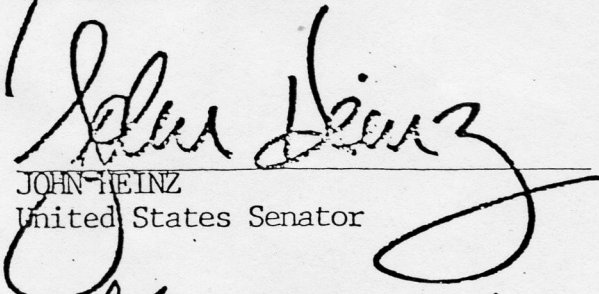
Sincerely,



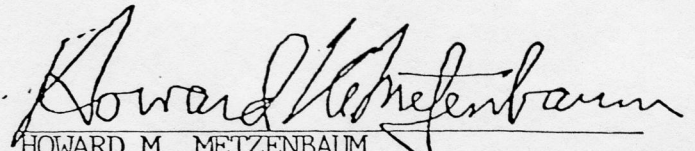
JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR.
United States Senator



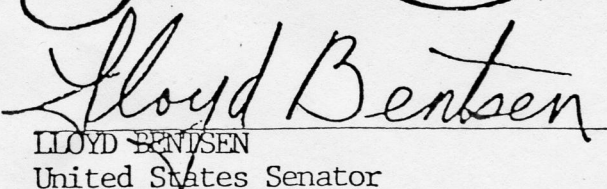
CHARLES McC. MATHIAS, JR.
United States Senator



JOHN HEINZ
United States Senator



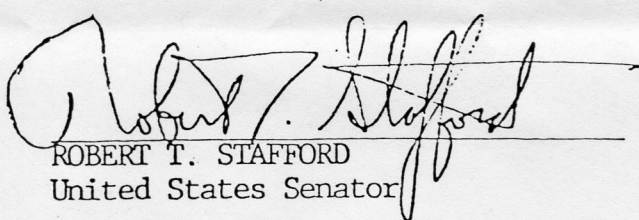
HOWARD M. METZENBAUM
United States Senator



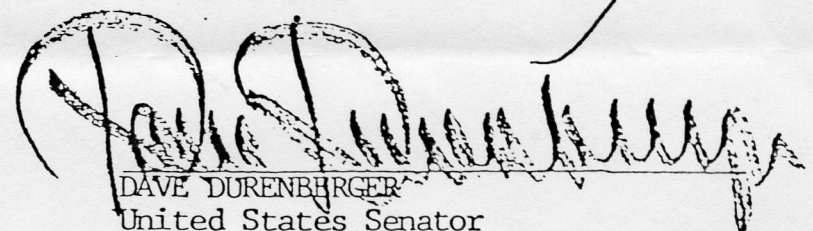
LLOYD BENTSEN
United States Senator



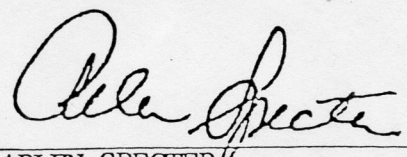
EDWARD M. KENNEDY
United States Senator



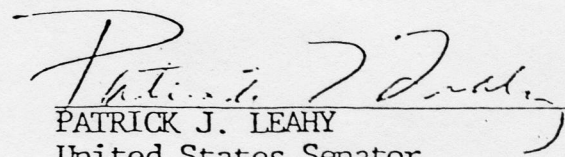
ROBERT T. STAFFORD
United States Senator



DAVE DURENBERGER
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ARLEN SPECTER
United States Senator



PATRICK J. LEAHY
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