

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

FACT SHEET

THE NATIONAL CANCER ACT OF 1971

The National Cancer Act of 1971 provides increased authorities and responsibilities for the Director of the National Cancer Institute, who will report directly to the President on matters concerning the budget of the National Cancer Institute.

The Act authorizes the Director of the National Cancer Institute, which will be located within the National Institutes of Health, to:

- Plan and develop an expanded, intensified, and coordinated cancer research program encompassing the programs of the National Cancer Institute, related programs of the other research institutes, and other Federal and non-Federal programs, with the advice of the National Cancer Advisory Board.
- Utilize existing research facilities and personnel of NIH for accelerated exploration of opportunities in areas of special promise.
- Encourage and coordinate cancer research by industrial concerns which evidence a capability for such research.
- Collect, analyze, and disseminate all data useful in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer, including the establishment of an international cancer data bank.

The Act also authorizes the establishment of 15 new centers for clinical research, training, and demonstration of advanced diagnostic and treatment methods related to cancer is authorized. For the planning, establishment, strengthening, and basic operating support of existing or new centers, cooperative agreements with public and private nonprofit agencies are also authorized.

Cancer control programs shall be established as necessary for cooperation with State and other health agencies in the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of cancer.

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Additional provisions of the Act include:

- a. The Directors of the National Institutes of Health and of the National Cancer Institute are to be appointed by the President.
- b. A three-member Cancer Panel, to be appointed by the President, will monitor the national cancer program and report directly to the President.
- c. The President will receive from the Director of the National Cancer Institute a scientific review of the program each year and a plan for the program during the next five years.
- d. The President will carry out and submit to Congress an administrative review within 1 year of the legislation's enactment with recommendations for any needed legislative changes.
- e. The budget of the National Cancer Institute will go directly from the Director of the National Cancer Institute to the President with opportunity for comment, but not change, by the Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the Director of the National Institutes of Health, and the National Cancer Advisory Board. Appropriated funds will go directly from the President and Office of Management and Budget to the National Cancer Institute.
- f. The President is authorized to seek additional funds for the cancer effort from the Congress if necessary to pursue immediately any development in the national cancer program.

The National Cancer Advisory Board will be composed of 23 members -- 18 appointed by the President -- not more than 12 of whom may be scientists and physicians among the leading authorities in the cancer field. Also on the board will be five Federal officials who shall serve ex officio.

The President's Cancer Panel will make periodic progress reports directly to the President. At least two members must be distinguished scientists or physicians. It will meet at the call of the chairman but not less than 12 times a year.

Earlier Actions This Year: Conquest of Cancer

1. On January 22, 1971 the President announced in the State of the Union Message that he would seek an additional \$100 million for cancer research.

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2. On May 11, 1971 the President announced that legislation was being sent to the Congress to establish a cancer cure program within the National Institutes of Health, with the Director of the new agency reporting directly to the President. (The legislation was introduced in the Senate on May 11. Hearings were held on June 10. The bill was reported by the Labor and Public Welfare Committee on June 29. The Senate passed the bill 79 to 1 on July 7.)
3. On May 26, 1971 the President commended the Congress for including his request for an additional \$100 million to launch an intensive campaign to find a cure for cancer in the Second Supplemental Appropriation bill which he signed on May 25, 1971. This additional \$100 million, when added to the regular FY '72 appropriation, gives the National Cancer Institute a current operating level of \$337.5 million compared to \$180 million during the first half of FY '72.
4. On July 7, 1971 the President thanked the Senate for its prompt bipartisan action in passing the Conquest of Cancer Act, co-sponsored by 67 senators of both parties.
5. On October 18, 1971 the President announced that the Army's Biological Defense Research Center at Fort Detrick, Maryland would be converted into a leading center for Cancer Research as part of the major campaign to conquer cancer.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 23, 1971

Office of the White House Press Secretary
-----THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Hope and comfort, the relief of suffering and the affirmation of life itself -- these are qualities which have traditionally been associated with the Christmas season. There could be no more appropriate time than this to sign into law the National Cancer Act of 1971. For this legislation -- perhaps more than any legislation I have signed as President of the United States -- can mean new hope and comfort in the years ahead for millions of people in this country and around the world.

The enactment of this legislation culminates a year-long effort to launch an unprecedented attack against cancer. I called for such a program in my State of the Union message in January 1971, and I expanded on that call in my special message to the Congress concerning health on February 18th. Early in May, I submitted to the Congress very specific proposals for a cancer-cure program -- proposals which are reflected in all important respects in the legislation I have signed today.

The effort to mobilize a concerted national campaign against cancer has continued to make significant progress since those proposals were submitted. One of the most important steps was the approval by the Congress of the additional \$100 million I requested to support an expanded attack on cancer. This additional \$100 million, when added to the regular appropriation for this fiscal year, gives the National Cancer Program a current operating level of \$337.5 million, compared to only \$180 million during the first half of fiscal year 1972. Another important component in our campaign was put in place in October when I announced that the bacteriological warfare research facilities at Fort Detrick, Maryland would be converted into a leading center for cancer research.

Now this year of preparation for an all-out assault on cancer comes to a climax with the signing of the National Cancer Act. The new organizational structure which this legislation establishes will enable us to mobilize far more effectively both our human and our financial resources in the fight against this dread disease.

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I appreciate deeply the months of hard and careful effort which so many members of the Congress gave to this cause. I am especially pleased that the new National Cancer Program incorporates the basic recommendations I made last May. It allows the President to appoint the Director of the National Cancer Institute and provides that the budget of the National Cancer Institute be submitted directly to the President. It creates a 3-member President's Cancer Panel to monitor its development and execution on a regular basis and a 23-member National Cancer Advisory Board to offer general guidance. Both of these groups are to be appointed by the President and will report directly to him. The important result of all these provisions is to place the full weight of the Presidency behind the National Cancer Program. As I recommended in May, the President will be able to take personal command of the Federal effort to conquer cancer so that its activities need not be stymied by the familiar dangers of bureaucracy and red tape.

Having asked for this authority -- and this responsibility -- I now pledge to exercise it to the fullest. Biomedical research is, of course, a notoriously uncertain enterprise and its rate of progress cannot be predicted with confidence. But I can say with the greatest confidence that there will be no uncertainty about the Government's role in this effort. I am determined that the Federal will and Federal resources will be committed as effectively as possible to the campaign against cancer and that nothing will be allowed to compromise that commitment.

I make this statement with even greater confidence knowing that Benno C. Schmidt has accepted my invitation to become the first chairman of the President's Cancer Panel. As Chairman of the National Panel of Consultants on the Conquest of Cancer, Mr. Schmidt has played an active role in the development and enactment of the National Cancer Act. He is an effective leader of men and a dedicated community servant. The Nation is fortunate that he will be heading this important panel in its critical first year.

Even as the plans for our National Cancer Program were being completed in the past few months, other developments have continued to fuel our hopes for further substantial progress in discovering the causes and cures of cancer. Scientists in all parts of the world have continued to contribute important new findings to the growing pool of knowledge about this disease. There continues to be every reason for believing that cancer research, of all of our research endeavors, may be in the best position to benefit from a new application of human and financial resources.

This is the case, however, only because so many men and women have already given so much to the battle against cancer in the past. Their energies and talents and sacrifices have built the foundations on which all future progress must rest.

As we plan for future progress, we should also remember that the expansion of the Federal campaign against cancer in no way diminishes the continuing importance of private and voluntary activities. It is essential, for example, that an organization such as the American Cancer Society -- which has raised so much money for this cause and which has done so much to promote research and education in this field -- continue to play its full effective role. The new National Cancer Program must not replace our present efforts to fight cancer; it must supplement them and build on them.

As this year comes to an end, cancer remains one of mankind's deadliest and most elusive enemies. Each year it takes more lives in this country alone than we lost in battle in all of World War II. Its long shadow of fear darkens every corner of the earth. But just as cancer represents a grim threat to men and women and children in all parts of the world, so the launching of our great crusade against cancer should be a cause for new hope among people everywhere.

With the enactment of the National Cancer Act, the major components for our campaign against cancer are in place and ready to move forward. I am particularly happy that the year 1971 -- at the beginning of which I issued my call for a new campaign against cancer -- can end with the signing of this landmark legislation.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DECEMBER 23, 1971

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE SIGNING OF THE
CANCER ACT OF 1971

STATE DINING ROOM

AT 12:00 NOON EST

Members of the Senate, Members of the House, Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are here today for the purpose of signing the Cancer Act of 1971. I hope that in the years ahead that we look back on this day and this action shown as being the most significant action taken during this Administration. It could be, because when we consider what cancer does each year in the United States, we find that more people each year die of cancer in the United States than all the Americans who lost their lives in World War II.

This shows us what is at stake. It tells us why I sent a Message to the Congress the first of this year, which provided for a national commitment for the conquest of cancer, to attempt to find a cure.

Now, with the cooperation of the Congress, with the cooperation of many of the people in this room, we have set up a procedure for the purpose of making a total national commitment. I am not going to go into the details of that procedure, except to say this: As a result of what has been done, as a result of the action which will come into being, as a result of signing this bill, the Congress is totally committed to provide the funds that are necessary, whatever is necessary, for the conquest of cancer. The President is totally committed -- we have a Presidential panel headed by Benno Schmidt, which will report directly to the President so that the President's influence, whenever necessary, can be used to reach this great goal.

And, in addition to that, all of the agencies of government, the National Institutes of Health, HEW, et cetera, are totally committed.

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Now, having said that, I have spoken exclusively of government up to this point. In this room are scores of people who have worked voluntarily for this cause for many, many years. The American Cancer Society, of course, is the best known organization, but there are many, many others as well.

In saying that there will be a Presidential commitment, a Congressional commitment and a government commitment, I should emphasize that a total national commitment means more than government. It means all the voluntary activities must also continue. We have to realize that only one-sixth of everything that is produced in America is produced by what government does. Five-sixths of what we do in America is produced by what people do in their voluntary and cooperative capacities.

So, we need the continued cooperation of all the volunteer organizations. You will have, of course, the total commitment of government and that is what the signing of this bill now does.

Finally I should emphasize, as Benno Schmidt mentioned just a moment ago, that we would not want to raise false hopes by simply the signing of an Act, but we can say this: That for those who have cancer, and who are looking for success in this field, they at least can have the assurance that everything that can be done by government, everything that can be done by voluntary agencies in this great, powerful, rich country, now will be done and that will give some hope and we hope those hopes will not be disappointed.

(At this point, President Nixon signed the Cancer Act.)

Now, ladies and gentlemen, for those of you who have not participated in signing ceremonies and that, of course, does not include the Members of the House and Senate who are here, I see that many of them have been here previously, the custom is always to sign with the Presidential pen. I will use two pens for the signature, but a souvenir pen will be available to everybody in the audience here. We had to stretch a little to find that many, but we did it.

Incidentally, it is a very good pen, but the box is worth more than the pen.

Benno, you get the "Richard". Dr. Letton, if you will step forward. The President of the American Cancer Society. You get the last name.

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DR. LETTON: Thank you, Mr. President.

We would like to think that this is a wonderful Christmas present in the signing of this bill today for the 52 million people in our country who will develop cancer who are now living.

This bill, we feel, is a real great opportunity for America, probably the greatest thing that has ever been done by the United States. To you, sir, who asked for this to be a national priority and to our friends in the Congress who gave us this bill, two and a half, two and a quarter million of the volunteers of the American Cancer Society asked that I express their appreciation. We are truly grateful, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Doctor.

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(AT 12:17 P.M. EST)