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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES  
WASHINGTON D.C. 20548

B-197793

March 3, 1981

✓ The Honorable William V. Roth, Jr.  
Chairman, Committee on Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate

SEN 06600

Dear Mr. Chairman:

[Establishment of]

I am most interested in S. 10, a bill you are sponsoring to establish a Commission on More Effective Government. I think a commission of this general type could be very useful during this period of our Nation's history. A commission, with broad public and private representation, could help focus public attention, discussion, analysis, and support on the steps that need to be taken to improve our ability to govern ourselves, and to restore public confidence in government at all levels.

Every viable Nation has a need for periodically renewing its sense of national purpose and of the appropriate role of governmental institutions within that Nation's life. I believe that now is such a time for our Nation, and that a broadly based commission could serve as a catalyst for such national self-renewal. Looking back over my 40 years of Federal Service, there have been few times as opportune as the present for taking stock of the limitations and capabilities of our governmental institutions, and for deliberately choosing the general course we should take over the next several decades to improve our processes of government. A commission could assist greatly in this task by outlining the kinds of steps that need to be taken.

When considering the specific provisions of such a bill, you may want to consider some of the following comments I have on the version before you.

First, I am concerned about the size of the commission. In my opinion, the more effective commissions in the past several decades have been the smaller ones. Scholars who have studied commissions have concluded that smaller commissions tend to meet more often, work harder, resolve their differences more constructively, and produce a report more rapidly than large commissions.

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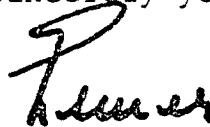
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Second, the bill has a provision that may have undesirable results on the composition of the commission. Section 4 as written would require that nine members of the commission be from private life, of which six would be "\* \* \* individuals not affiliated with any political party" (see Sec. 4(b)(1), (2), and (3)). This provision could have the effect of excluding from membership individuals who are merely registered in a party but hold no office or exercise similar responsibilities in the party. It would be preferable to require that the six individuals not be engaged in party leadership activities or hold a position in a party.

Finally, Section 4(a) provides for membership on the commission only by members of the executive branch and the Congress, and from private life. This would preclude the appointment of members of the judicial branch, the legislative branch support agencies, and State and local governments.\* I think a commission of this kind should not be precluded from drawing upon appropriate talent and expertise no matter where it may reside.

If I or any of my staff may be of assistance to you during your consideration of this bill, please feel free to contact us. A copy of this letter is being sent to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely yours,



Comptroller General  
of the United States

cc: The Honorable David Stockman  
Director, Office of Management  
and Budget

*Congress might well want to  
make the Comptroller General a  
member.*