

THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

College of Medicine
Division of Pediatric Surgery
Dale G. Johnson, M.D.
Michael E. Matiak, M.D.

Primary Children's Medical Center
320 Twelfth Avenue
Salt Lake City, Utah 84103
328-9061

September 10, 1981

Senator Orrin Hatch
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Qualifications of Doctor C. Everett Koop
for Appointment as Surgeon General, USPHS

Dear Senator Hatch:

I have been asked to write you regarding my view of Doctor C. Everett Koop and his credentials and suitability for appointment as Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service, and I am pleased to do so. I have known Doctor Koop intimately since 1963, and I consider him an outstanding organizer, a charismatic leader, a distinguished pediatric surgeon and teacher, and a person of genuine humanitarian concerns.

I am aware of the negative press Doctor Koop has received, and I am familiar with the reasons for this and the issues involved. One of Doctor Koop's outstanding qualities is his forthrightness and his courage to speak out regarding his convictions. This tendency has gotten him deeply involved in the current national turmoil over "Right to Life" issues and has polarized many people against him. I know the content of the films and lectures Doctor Koop has prepared on this subject and I have read his book. I do not agree with all of his positions, and in fact I strongly disagree with some of the things he has written. The fact that we have such differences, however, has not detracted from our personal or professional relationship. Doctor Koop is not a single issue person, he is not an irrational bigot, and he certainly is not incompetent in the areas of public health concerns for our nation. I fail to see why his strong personal position on one highly controversial social issue should negate his effectiveness as an administrator and a medical professional of great national and international experience.

I don't have Doctor Koop's curriculum vitae in front of me, but I know personally that he has been involved in medical missionary efforts for underprivileged people in the African continent for many, many years. As a personal family project he has supplied medical care and health care to a tribe of Terascan Indians in Mexico. He has served as consultant for public health problems in the Dominican Republic and has traveled the world over as a distinguished surgical lecturer throughout the United States, Europe, some Eastern block countries, Japan, China, Korea, and some parts of Southeast Asia. It is true that

Doctor Koop lacks a formal degree in public health. I do not know whether that is a requirement and has always been a prerequisite for appointment to the post of Surgeon General, but I find it hard to see why that should be. Doctor Koop is a master in dealing with people, in getting things done, in getting the right information from authoritative sources, in seeing the broad picture, and in synthesizing and pulling together facts to form useful and workable solutions. He has received an honorary degree from the University of Liverpool for his help and contributions to pediatric surgery in Great Britain. He is also one of the rare recipients of the French Legion of Honor.

There are some things Doctor Koop has written on controversial issues that I wish he had not written. However, I suspect we might all be in that position if we were as forthright and committed as he is. I know the man personally and I know he is not an irrational zealot and he does not ride rough shod over the feelings and considered opinions of his colleagues.

As a fellow pediatric surgeon, my own professional concerns relate to the welfare of children. I can think of no one who could better serve as an advocate for children in the United States than Doctor C. Everett Koop. I believe he is eminently qualified to serve as Surgeon General of the U.S.P.H.S., and it is my hope that this letter might reinforce your own opinion to this effect.

Sincerely yours,



Dale G. Johnson, M.D.
Professor of Surgery
Professor of Pediatrics

DGJ/gb

cc: Senator Edward M. Kennedy
Honorable Richard Schweiker
Edward Brandt, M.D.
Mr. Edward Meese

bcc: *C. Everett Koop, M.D.*