



## Congressional Black Caucus Reports to the People

Effective government action to reverse the continuing trend toward two separate and unequal societies in the United States remains critical.

Many government programs to serve minorities and the poor are on the federal law books. How well are the various federal agencies implementing these programs? Are the agencies doing what the programs are intended to do?

In addition to passing laws, Congress is also charged with overseeing their implementation. This oversight or watchdog responsibility, I am sorry to report, is too often overlooked. I feel strongly that none of these is effective until it is actually serving the people.

On a number of occasions my oversight efforts have revealed serious inadequacies in federal programs, and these findings have often resulted in agencies changing their practices.

Let me cite two examples, one in the field of children's health and one in federal assistance to low-income homeowners.

**EPSDT:** There is a federal program which is intended to assure that low-income children receive regular, high quality medical examinations, preventive care, and necessary treatment. It is called the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) Program.

After Congress passed the EPSDT legislation in 1967, it took the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare until 1972 to issue the EPSDT operating regulations and longer still to get started. Furthermore, the program has not worked as intended.

It is painfully clear that no segment of our population is more in need of regular and complete medical examinations than the children of poor families. Therefore, I investigated the failure of this program with the help of the General Accounting Office, Congress' independent audit agency.

We found in Illinois, for example, a screening rate less than two percent. Last year, of the 13 million children eligible nationwide for comprehensive care under this program, only 1.7 million were served.

To improve this situation I am encouraged by a proposal to Congress from President Carter for a new Child Health Assessment Program to revise substantially the existing EPSDT program. This will provide much higher financial incentives for the states to move out and identify the poorest children, have them examined, and have them treated.

**Homeowners Assistance Program:** Another example of effective Congressional oversight work is with the Section 518(b) program of the federal Homeowners Assistance Program. The need for adequate and safe housing in our cities is pressing.

Many of my constituents wrote to me detailing difficulties they were having with HUD, so I started an investigation. In this program many low-income home buyers relied on government appraisals to uncover structural problems when they bought their homes.

However, in the appraisals such dangerous problems as worn-out roofs, defective heating systems, and rotten porches and steps were often overlooked. The homeowner claims resulting from these conditions were badly mishandled by HUD.

As a result of my investigations with the help of the Comptroller General of the United States, the Department of Housing and Urban Development agreed this year to reconsider thousands of unpaid and underpaid claims by homeowners.

**Federal Urban Ombudsman:** This December I met privately with President Carter at the White House. Our discussion ranged over a wide array of issue affecting my

partly depressed, urban Congressional District on Chicago's South Side in particular and urban America in general.

I suggested to the President that a comprehensive urban revitalization program include appointing a Federal Urban Ombudsman. The responsibility of the Federal Urban Ombudsman would be to respond to complaints of citizens and local government officials when a federal program is not meeting the needs of those whom it was designed to serve.

Congress appropriates each year billions of dollars for federal programs to revitalize our urban areas. Past program management practices like those uncovered in my past program management practices like those uncovered in my oversight work have cost taxpayers millions of dollars. Such agency mismanagement has contributed to continued urban blight.

When the intent of Congress is frustrated and negated by the ineptness of local administrators, then it is we in the Congress who must and will take action to correct the situation.

**You Can Help:** Individual citizens and organizations can help in oversight by informing your own legislators about the performance of federal programs in your community. This may influence their view of the program and could lead to action.

My own experience has convinced me that effective legislation oversight is necessary to insure that federal programs do in fact operate as intended.

Congressmen can get action rolling to bring services to the people, and we can work to insure that in a given program citizens get a fair shake.

We in the Congressional Black Caucus work to be articulate and effective advocates for minorities and the poor. We are in a special position to make known to the rest of the Congress and to the Administration the impact and results of federal programs designed to aid minorities and the poor.

### CETA PICKETED

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At that meeting, an artist, totally unknown to anyone in the church, presented a Black Christ to Edward, who invited the man to attend church on Sunday to present the painting to the church membership.

Edward Smith states he gets his inspiration from Proverbs 25:13 Apply Thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge.

Joe Prudhomme stated that "Edward Smith was picketing in front of the CETA Administration offices at 300 Las Vegas Blvd. So. with signs at least 24 x 30 inches with the letters SCLC at least 6 to 8 inches. When asked to take the signs down, they refused."

Edward Smith has been actively working trying to get signatures of members in order to hold an election in February, but Joe Prudhomme states that the petitions Edward is circulating are not sanctioned by the Executive Board of SCLC and therefore cannot be effective.

According to Joe Prudhomme, President of SCLC and Elmo Aderholt, Treasurer of SCLC, Edward Smith is not acting with SCLC's best interests, but is going against SCLC Policy in picketing.

## Social Security Fraud

A 54 year old Long Beach, California, man found that cheating the Social Security Administration out of money wasn't as simple as it looked.

On different occasions, Alexander Bush, 1920 Lime Avenue, Long Beach, falsely claimed that he had not received his monthly Supplemental Security Income (SSI) check. He was issued substitute SSI checks which he also cashed. The duplicate funds amounted to \$1,947.

Internal security procedures of the Social Security Administration caught up with Bush, and he wound up with an 18 months sentence in Federal prison for fraud. Los Angeles Federal District Court Judge Robert Firth suspended all but 30 days of the sentence which Bush will start serving when he gets out of a State prison, his current address for other crimes. Bush was also placed on three years probation and ordered to repay the \$1,947 he received fraudulently.

Bush has been receiving SSI payments as a disabled person since September 1974. SSI is a program to provide monthly cash payments to needy, aged, blind, and disabled persons with limited income and resources.

The scheme thought up by Bush is not new. Social security employees are alert to the scheme, and such cases will be prosecuted diligently, Social Security District Manager, George Nakamura in Las Vegas announced. Because SSI is a needs program, immediate steps are taken to replace a regular SSI check that was not received. Usually, substitute checks are issued within 10 days.

Nakamura said that some SSI recipients try to abuse the system by alleging non-receipt of their check in order to get two checks for one month. Some even go to different social security offices claiming that their SSI check did not arrive.

The scheme may work for a while Nakamura reported, but eventually the system will alert the Treasury Department and the Social Security Administration and the person will be caught and prosecuted.

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