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Presidential Inability and Vacancies in the Office of the Vice President

House of Representatives. United States

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PRESIDENTIAL INABILITY AND VACANCIES IN THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

JUNE 30, 1965.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. CELLER, from the committee of conference, submitted the
following

CONFERENCE REPORT

[To accompany S.J. Res. 1]

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the House to the joint resolution (S.J. Res. 1) proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relating to succession to the Presidency and Vice-Presidency and to cases where the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, having met, after full and free conference, have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses as follows:

That the Senate recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the House and agree to the same with an amendment as follows:

In lieu of the matter proposed to be inserted by the House amendment insert the following:

That the following article is proposed as an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which shall be valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution when ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States within seven years from the date of its submission by the Congress:

"ARTICLE —

"SECTION 1. In case of the removal of the President from office or of his death or resignation, the Vice President shall become President.

"SEC. 2. Whenever there is a vacancy in the office of the Vice President, the President shall nominate a Vice President who shall take office upon confirmation by a majority vote of both Houses of Congress.

"SEC. 3. Whenever the President transmits to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives his written declaration that he is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, and until he transmits to them a written declaration to the contrary,

such powers and duties shall be discharged by the Vice President as Acting President.

"SEC. 4. Whenever the Vice President and a majority of either the principal officers of the executive departments or of such other body as Congress may by law provide, transmit to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives their written declaration that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President shall immediately assume the powers and duties of the office as Acting President.

"Thereafter, when the President transmits to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives his written declaration that no inability exists, he shall resume the powers and duties of his office unless the Vice President and a majority of either the principal officers of the executive department or of such other body as Congress may by law provide, transmit within four days to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives their written declaration that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office. Thereupon Congress shall decide the issue, assembling within forty-eight hours for that purpose if not in session. If the Congress, within twenty-one days after receipt of the latter written declaration, or, if Congress is not in session, within twenty-one days after Congress is required to assemble, determines by two-thirds vote of both Houses that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President shall continue to discharge the same as Acting President; otherwise, the President shall resume the powers and duties of his office."

And the House agree to the same.

EMANUEL CELLER,
BYRON G. ROGERS,
JAMES C. CORMAN,
WILLIAM M. McCULLOCH,
RICHARD H. POFF,
Managers on the Part of the House.
BIRCH E. BAYH, Jr.,
JAMES O. EASTLAND,
SAM J. ERVIN, Jr.,
EVERETT M. DIRKSEN,
ROMAN L. HRUSKA,
Managers on the Part of the Senate.

STATEMENT OF THE MANAGERS ON THE PART OF THE HOUSE

The managers on the part of the House at the conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the House to the bill (S.J. Res. 1) proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relating to succession to the Presidency and Vice-Presidency and to cases where the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, submit the following statement in explanation of the effect of the action agreed upon by the conferees and recommended in the accompanying conference report:

The House passed House Joint Resolution 1 and then substituted the provisions it had adopted by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting all of its provisions in Senate Joint Resolution 1. The Senate insisted upon its version and requested a conference; the House then agreed to the conference. The conference report recommends that the Senate recede from its disagreement to the House amendment and agree to the same with an amendment, the amendment being to insert in lieu of the matter inserted by the House amendment the matter agreed to by the conferees and that the House agree thereto.

In substance, the conference report contains substantially the language of the House amendment with a few exceptions.

Sections 1 and 2 of the proposed constitutional amendment were not in disagreement. However, in sections 3 and 4, the Senate provided that the transmittal of the notification of a President's inability be to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The House version provided that the transmittal be to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The conference report provides that the transmittal be to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

In section 3, the Senate provided that after receipt of the President's written declaration of his inability that such powers and duties would then be discharged by the Vice President as Acting President. The House version provided the same provision except it added the clause "and until he transmits a written declaration to the contrary". The conference report adopts the House language with one minor change for purposes of clarification by adding the phrase "to them", meaning the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House.

The first paragraph of section 4, outside of adopting the language of the House designating the recipient of the letter of transmittal be the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, minor change in language was made for purposes of clarification.

In the Senate version there was a specific section; namely, section 5, dealing with the procedure that when the President sent to the Congress his written declaration that he was no longer disabled he could resume the powers and duties of his office unless the Vice President

and a majority of the principal officers of the executive departments, or such other body as the Congress might by law provide, transmit within 7 days to the designated officers of the Congress their written declaration that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office. Thereupon, the Congress would immediately proceed to decide the issue. It further provided that if the Congress determines by two-thirds vote of both Houses that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President would continue to discharge the same as Acting President; otherwise, the President would resume the powers and duties of his office.

The House version combined sections 4 and 5 into one section, now section 4. Under the House version, the Vice President had 2 days in which to decide whether or not to send a letter stating that he and a majority of the officers of the executive departments, or such other body as Congress may by law provide, that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office. The conference report provides that the period of time for the transmittal of the letter must be within 4 days.

The Senate provision did not provide for the convening of the Congress to decide this issue if it was not in session; the House provided that the Congress must convene for this specific purpose of deciding the issue within 48 hours after the receipt of the written declaration that the President is still disabled. The conference report adopts the language of the House.

The Senate provision placed no time limitation on the Congress for determining whether or not the President was still disabled. The House version provided that determination by the Congress must be made within 10 days after the receipt of the written declaration of the Vice President and a majority of the principal officers of the executive departments, or such other body as Congress may by law provide. The conference report adopts the principle of limiting the period of time within which the Congress must determine the issue, and while the House original version was 10 days and the Senate version an unlimited period of time, the report requires a final determination within 21 days. The 21-day period, if the Congress is in session, runs from the date of receipt of the letter. It further provides that if the Congress is not in session the 21-day period runs from the time that the Congress convenes.

A vote of less than two-thirds by either House would immediately authorize the President to assume the powers and duties of his office.

EMANUEL CELLER,
BYRON G. ROGERS,
JAMES C. CORMAN,
WILLIAM M. McCULLOCH,
RICHARD H. POFF,
Managers on the Part of the House.