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January 23, 1950

White House Press Conference on Fallout Protection

Statement of Special Committee on Civil Defense of the Government

This meeting today with President Eisenhower and the military and civilian leaders of his Administration was of major importance and significance. We wish all Americans to have participated in it.

The statement of the President this morning, and the presence of the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, of the Secretary of State, of the Under Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, of the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, and the Director of OCDM, conclusively established that fallout protection for our American citizens, in the event of a nuclear attack against us, is a national objective but is a requirement of national defense.

General Twining assured us that a fallout shelter program is "essential" to our military defense and to our policy of strengthening our deterrence through deterrence of nuclear attack. Secretary Twining also emphasized the direct relationship between a fallout shelter program and the successful conduct of our foreign policy as well as our national strength and survival. He expressed his deepest hope that we will make prompt and substantial progress toward the protection of our people.

We are satisfied that, if our foreign policy is to be successful, if our foreign negotiations are to be successful, if our military deterrence is to be effective, and our military strength is to be meaningful, if the American people are to have the strength and ability to resist nuclear blackmail, if our nation is to survive, if an aggressor should do the unthinkable and unendurable, if he strikes upon us, then, for each of these reasons, fallout protection for our citizens is imperative.

We believe, based on the present situation we have before us, that fallout protection for our people is essential, that, although there are many problems, a very high degree of protection is achievable, that it is achievable now and that it is achievable at the reach of our people and nation. We believe that the Government should participate actively in providing the leadership, the financial support and the leadership which is needed to carry out an effective program of fallout protection for our people, that it can be achieved in the near future.

Regardless, however, of the extent of the Government's support and inducements that may be forthcoming, it is our feeling, feeling keenly our own responsibility, that we should:

- (a) to educate the public to the fact that nuclear fallout is a means of protecting ourselves;
- (b) to help our citizens and their families to be able to survive fallout in the event of a nuclear attack on our country.

(c) to provide fallout protection in state owned facilities; and

(d) to establish a protected seat of state government to assure government leadership and function both during and after any possible attack.

Our immediate task as Governors is, in cooperation with federal officials, to allocate among federal, state and local governments the various responsibilities for a program which will make fallout protection for all our citizens a prompt reality.

We understand that it is the policy of the United States to encourage on a Federal-State partnership basis:

(a) Training of all citizens in personal survival under presently prevailing conditions;

(b) A survey of existing facilities for utilization as fallout shelters;

(c) Construction of home and community type fallout shelters;

(d) Providing such shelters with adequate food and water plus necessary communication and other facilities; and

(e) Participation by citizens in the development and execution of these plans.

We welcome the designation today by President Eisenhower of Governor Hoogh as his personal representative to work with us in agreeing upon a joint program and allocating the necessary responsibilities for its fulfillment.

We are confident that fallout protection for all our citizens can be achieved with vigorous and constructive leadership by federal and state officials working effectively together.

To this task we shall now turn with a confidence that, by discharging this responsibility successfully, we will be making a significant contribution to our nation's quest for a truly meaningful peace—a peace with liberty and justice, and trust, among men.

Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller, Chairman
Governor Edmund G. Byrne
Governor George D. Clyde
Governor Ernest B. Hollings
Governor G. Mennen Williams