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Legislative agenda for the 84th Congress, first session

Strom Thurmond

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My fellow South Carolinians:

As the 2nd Session of the 84th Congress convened this week, most observers were predicting it would be one of the liveliest sessions in history. Many important issues are to be decided.

The Congress opened the session Tuesday. On Thursday the President's annual State of the Union address was read by the Senate Clerk, in the President's absence. After this was completed, the Senate began its work of delving into important legislative matters.

I immediately introduced two bills which I believe are of major importance. One would prohibit the service or consumption of alcoholic beverages aboard our commercial and service airliners. The other would deny tax-exempt status under the Internal Revenue Code to any organization which engages in the promotion of litigation or lawsuits to which it is not a party.

During the Congressional recess period, I had occasion to visit every section of South Carolina in an effort to ascertain which issues most concerned our people. I found our people to be interested in many vital issues and problems facing our nation. The three issues in which I discovered the most intense interest, however, were concern over federal disregard for state sovereignty, the farm problem, and the threats posed to our textile industry by the influx of cheap imports from foreign countries.
During the last session I was able to get two pieces of legislation passed, as a result of which the Japanese have imposed temporary quotas on their textile shipments to the United States. Self-imposed quotas, however, are not enough. I have a bill pending in the Senate now that would free us of much of our surplus cotton and place import quotas on foreign-manufactured textile products. It is essential that this legislation be passed as soon as possible.

Last year I also sought to deal with the matter of federal encroachment on state sovereignty, especially the Supreme Court decision against segregation in our public schools. A bill I introduced to remove appellate jurisdiction from the Supreme Court and the Circuit Courts of Appeal in educational matters is still being held up in the Senate Judiciary Committee. I shall renew my efforts to gain favorable action on this bill. In addition, I am considering new legislation to cope with this problem.

The farm problem, one of the most serious facing our nation as a whole, has also caused me deep concern. Our farmers are caught in a tight economic bind between declining prices they receive for their commodities and rising production costs. I have a few bills pending which I believe will help alleviate this situation. In the meantime, however, I am proposing a new measure which should give our farmers a strong voice in determining what type legislation they desire the Congress to consider in arriving at a solution to their problems.

Early next week I plan to introduce a joint resolution establishing a non-partisan commission to study farm problems and
make legislative recommendations to remedy them. The Commission would be composed principally of farmers and others engaged in agricultural pursuits. Ex-officio members would consist of the Secretary of Agriculture and the ranking majority and minority members of the congressional committees on Agriculture. All of the appointed members would have to be selected from private life. In other words, the Commission would be virtually free from politics.

The Commission would study the specific problems of declining farm prices, farm commodity surpluses, the expansion of domestic and foreign markets, and the problem of relief in the event of farm disasters. Other problems might be considered at the discretion of the Commission.

While I am placing particular emphasis this session on the three major problems I have discussed, you can be assured that there are many other important legislative matters that concern me and are receiving my earnest attention and consideration. I hope to discuss some of these with you during succeeding programs. I hope you will be able to tune in to this station at that time.

Thank you.