

Even President Johnson has pointed out the need for eliminating unnecessary red tape in Federal grant-in-aid programs. As recently as last October, the President publicly noted that many Federal agencies are taking much too long to process applications filed by state and local governments.

Our council agrees. We think it is time that something be done to bring some order to the conduct of the various assistance programs, some of which are so ineptly handled that they have been cited by local public health officials as doing more harm than good. Legislation which once raised aspirations and aroused hopes of many citizens is now the source of grave disappointment.

In just the water-sewer field alone, hundreds (perhaps even thousands) of applications have been in process for periods in excess of half a year. Rules and procedures for handling applications are still being finalized and standardized more than 2 years after the programs have been implemented. Despite the knowledge that appropriated funds cannot possibly meet existing requests, local offices of some agencies continue to promote their respective programs and to solicit applications. Mayors and other local officials have termed the delays and constant procedural changes a "break of faith which produces frustration and impatience on the part of the very people the Government is trying to aid."

The Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, with its proposed coordination of policy in the administration of grants and loans for urban development, could be a valuable aid in correcting current difficulties. We particularly endorse the provisions of titles IV, V, and VI of S. 698 with regard to (1) establishment of rules and regulations for uniform evaluation and review of urban development programs, (2) regular congressional review of the process of ongoing or expiring programs, and (3) Presidential authority to consolidate overlapping and duplicative programs within the same functional areas.

In endorsing such review, however, we would like to suggest that the Congress and the executive branch establish a channel by which the comments and recommendations of applicants and their agents may be included as an integral part of program studies. This suggestion is prompted by the misleading content of the September 1967 interagency report to the President. That report, entitled "Reducing Federal Grant-in-Aid Processing Time," was prepared by a joint administrative task force comprised of representatives of various participating Federal agencies. In our opinion, the report is more a reflection of desired improvements which agencies hope to achieve, than it is a summary of specific accomplishments.

The President, on October 31, 1967, directed that certain of the improvements stipulated in the task force report be carried through. There is real question as to whether the President's directive has, in fact, received total compliance. As an example, the report calls for standard guide documents for engineers. These have not been forthcoming and, in view of the complexities of individual projects, probably should not be adopted except in a general form. In another instance, the report discusses elimination of repetitious information and requests for more data during preliminary review and rating processes. Yet communities which have already received grant clearance still suffer through time delays caused by Federal reinvestigation of certi-